Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

The Swing from Science and Changes in Contemporary Capitalism — V. C. Marshall and S. Ruhemann

The Workers' Theatre in the Thirties — Len Jones

The Struggle of the Bulgarian People against Fascism during 1941-44—Nikifor Gornenski

A Bulgarian Partisan Attack on a Nazi Unit

Discussion:

Trends in Youth Culture — *Jim Cornelius*

Man, Environment and the Great Growth Debate — *Brian Filling*, *Alan B. Anderson*

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 18, Number 9

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The front cover was designed by Pat Cook.

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Editorial Comments

BY the time this issue is in our readers' hands they will probably know whether or not there is to be an autumn General Election.

The aims and tasks facing all communists, socialists, and progressives in such an election were clearly outlined by John Gollan, General Secretary of the Communist Party, in his report to the July meeting of its Executive Committee.[1]

> "The overall aim must be a majority Labour Government. The turnover of votes to get this will be a big task. We cannot assume that victory will be automatic. Victory will demand a powerful mass movement for policies to solve Britain's crisis in the interests of the working people."

Truly, victory will not be easy. For alongside the massive CBI campaign against any further nationalisation, the press and the rest of the media will do their utmost to confuse and distort the issues, divert attention from past Tory policies, depict the government's policies as "ruinous socialism" responsible for continued and increasing inflation, balance of payments deficits and all the other aspects of British capitalism's crisis.

On the other side, many Labour supporters while recognising some of the positive early acts of the Labour government, will have had their enthusiasm dampened by many of its recent actions. Its failure to take decisive steps to limit profits, to curb the multi-nationals, to nationalise outright the production and distribution of North Sea oil, to limit the effects of inflation on living standards by strict price control, the way it has dragged its feet over wage increases for grossly underpaid sections of workers, its record in foreign affairs—Northern Ireland, gunboats for the Chile fascist junta, the nuclear bomb tests, its attitude on the Common Market and Cyprus—are not likely to generate the grass roots enthusiasm decisive for securing a Labour majority.

The "White Paper" on industry and nationalisation with its back-peddling on some of the main proposals in the February Election manifesto, will likewise weaken morale.

But undoubtedly, the greatest gift to the Tories will have been Roy Jenkins' speech on July 26, and those of Shirley Williams, Michael Stewart and especially the repeated anti-nationalisation trumpetings of Reg Prentice.

By their talk of adapting Labour's policies to "moderate opinion" and "the middle ground" they strengthen support for a coalition "government of national unity". The policies Jenkins and the Labour right-wing advocate to cope with inflation, are, like those of the Liberals and Tories, aimed at putting the burden of the crisis on the people. But, of course, in a gentlemanly fashion. "If we cannot solve it (inflation) by civilised methods, then someone within a few years will solve it by intolerable and uncivilised ones." (Roy Jenkins)

What needs to be done in order to defeat the right and advance the left in the labour movement is outlined in vivid and popular language by Gerry Cohen in his pamphlet "Which Way for Labour"[2].

> "What is crucial . . . is not to rely on slick parliamentary manoeuvres but to act decisively in such a way that such a climate of public opinion is created . . . as will lead to a decisive defeat for the Tories in the General Election."

Unity in action is emphasised again and again as the key to securing these objectives and a detailed "programme for common action" presented and explained, as the basis for securing it.

This programme "will be the basis of the election fight of the Communist Party and the struggle in every constituency to ensure a Labour majority" (John Gollan—Report to the July Executive).

Running through both the Report and the pamphlet is the emphasis that unity and the victory of the left require a much bigger, more influential Communist Party, more votes for the Communist candidates in the election and a greatly increased circulation of the *Morning Star*.

---

[1] See *Comment*, July 27, 1974.

[2] "Which Way for Labour" by Gerry Cohen, Communist Party Pamphlet, 12p.

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"JUSTICE" IN FEDERAL GERMANY

Alan Winnington (*Morning Star*, July 5th) describing scenes at the trial of Beate Karsfeld, a French anti-fascist, in Cologne, added the following:—

> "In 1972, the last full year for which figures are available, West German authorities were (reluctantly) forced to take up 2,200 cases against Nazi criminals. Of these 2,101 were dropped by the public prosecutors, 101 of the accused were either acquitted or set free and 18 were found guilty".

Figures for 1973 show the continuation of this trend. Twenty-two Nazi war criminals were brought to trial. Of these, 14 were acquitted, three had proceedings against them dropped, three were found guilty but given no sentence. The result of the remaining two cases have not as yet been announced.

Some idea of the appalling leniency with which ex-Nazis are being treated can be seen from the fact that not one of the 1,026 Nazi war criminals sentenced in their absence by French courts has yet been extradited. They have continued to live comfortably and untouched in Western Germany. This in spite of a treaty signed by the Four Powers and Federal Germany in 1952 pledging them to extradite Nazi war criminals to the countries where their crimes were committed.

OCTOBER ISSUE MARXISM TODAY

will contain

Ron Bellamy
MORE ABOUT INFLATION

Dave Cook
STUDENT MOVEMENT, LEFT UNITY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Maurice Cornforth
SIR KARL POPPER—DOCTRINAIRE ANTI-MARXIST

E. J. Hobsbawm
THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND MILITARY COUPS

The German authorities are working overtime to secure a moratorium on any further trials of Nazi war criminals or the implementation of sentences passed on them in their absence, by means of a Statute of Limitations. But when it comes to people whose only "crime" is membership of progressive political organisations or support for their ideas, West German "justice" shows its other face.

PERSECUTION OF PROGRESSIVES

We have given details in previous issues of the persecution of progressives, especially of those employed in the West German public services, particularly in education. But we think it important to publish the following extract from a statement by the *Bund demokratischer Wissenschaftler* (West German Association of German Democratic Scientists and Teachers).

> "On February 28, 1972 the Chancellor and heads of the "Länder" (provincial governments) of the Federal Republic passed a 'Resolution concerning the enemies of the Constitution in the public services', whereby members of legal parties and organisations can be debarred from employment in public service posts if they are regarded as constitutional enemies by their political opponents. This decision has subsequently become a means of preventing teachers, judges and university teachers who are members of the German Communist Party (DKP) or the left wing of the governing Social Democratic Party (SPD) from practising their professions.
>
> "The practice of 'Berufsverbot' (i.e. banning people from jobs on political grounds) over the past few years has resulted in highly qualified scientists being unable to take up the appointments for which they had been selected by university committees, because of intervention by governmental administration. The appointment of Professor Horst Holzer, the leading sociologist in the field of communication studies in the Federal Republic, to a chair in the university of Bremen in June 1971, was rejected because of his membership of the DKP. At the beginning of April 1974 Professor Holzer was sacked by the Bavarian Ministry for Education and Culture because of his membership of the DKP."

The Bund has mounted a big campaign in Western Germany and internationally against this campaign of political victimisation. It has received support from artists, scientists, writers, teachers, in Britain, France and Italy to a Declaration of Protest against the proposed law.

We urge our readers, especially those in the universities and professions to do all they can to secure signatures for this Declaration. Copies can be obtained from:— Bund demokratischer Wissenschaftler, 355 Marburg/Lahn, Universitatstrasse 62, Postfach 1162, Federal German Republic.

CUL 6

One of the most exciting expressions of the growing interest in Marxism among students, was the total of 632 registrations

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for the 6th Communist University of London —held at Imperial College Students Union, between July 6-14. (This figure was two and a half times higher than last year.) Over recent years there have been sporadic attempts by students and young lecturers in the larger universities to establish counter courses to critically examine the content of "traditional courses".

The Communist University with eleven courses applying detailed Marxist analysis at specialist level, should do much to strengthen this movement. An Introductory course in basic Marxism at the CU attracted 150 registrations, testifying to the massive interest that the sell-out of the first print of *About Marxism*, the introductory pamphlet published by the Communist Party Education Dept., revealed.

MAN'S DEADLY SINS

We all know and enjoy Konrad Lorenz's fascinating study of the ways of jackdaws, fighting fish, greylag geese and ducklings. Not only are these remarkable and surprising studies of animal behaviour but brilliantly written. But Lorenz has become even more widely known for his extension of the behaviour patterns of his fish and geese to man with the intention of proving man's innate aggression which being established genetically by the survival of the fittest, is now ineradicable—except by a million years or so to breed it out! When education tries to overcome heredity it is bound to fail.

Hence his earlier book on Aggression and now the present work[3] which says no more about geese but a lot more about man. The deadly sins are first overpopulation and the exhaustion of our resources, and then "Man's Race against Himself". Man as inherently individualistic and competitive and concerned always to dominate others by physical power, has set himself on the road to self-destruction. Feelings for others diminish the genes which determine our lives, are rotten and there is no hope.

The public, always impressed by what claims to be science, is unaware of the consensus of scientific opinion against identifying man and his civilisation with that of animals who live by instinct and not by reason. Man in making his technology and his economy to work makes himself, and if his economy is to satisfy his needs it must be a co-operative one for possessive individualism has failed.

But the attempts by scientists to counter some of these prevailing myths concerning man's innate aggressiveness and genetically determined behaviour have not succeeded, as the appearance of this book shows. Why are such books seized upon so avidly? It is seldom realised that it is because these myths serve in the maintenance of a particular social order that rational rebuttals fall on deaf ears. Theories that form so substantial a system-maintaining role need more than reasoned arguments to refute them, for they constitute a basic element of the prevailing ideology of capitalism.

Lenin was never tired of pointing out that workers must have their own class-directed and objective ideas otherwise they will fall a prey to the ever pervasive ideas of their unrelenting enemies. It is therefore never enough to depend on class militancy; a class system of really scientific ideas is necessary too. The refutation of Lorenz and his allies should be one of the main tasks if we are to accomplish this.

BEAVERBROOK

The immense biography of Beaverbrook by A. J. P. Taylor, now issued in paperback (Penguin Books £1.10), is erected by a man to whom the company of the Canadian financier, British press baron and maverick Tory politico offered "joys beyond description".

Here is rich store, in nearly 900 pages, of gossip and anecdote and illumination of the top Tory cabals for over half a century. Fascination in the best Taylor manner.

A mischievous boy to the end, Beaverbrook is shown making fortunes, rocking cabinets, running papers and manipulating his people and living life for the hell of it. Based mainly on the Beaverbrook papers, this record follows the imp's adventures blow by blow.

Yet it fails to explore the psychology of its hero, to assess in a historian's spirit the press lord system, or to relate the man to his times and the movement of events.

Who should be surprised? For this work narrates with deep relish the peregrinations of a political Puck, and this approach fixes its limits.

THE NEW PENGUIN MARX

The useful Penguin Marx Library continues to grow. The latest addition—Volume Three[4]

[3] Konrad Lorenz, *Civilised Man's Eight Deadly Sins* (Methuen. £1.60)

[4] Penguin Marx Library Volume Three, *The First International and After*, edited and introduced by David Fernbach, £1.00.

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deals mainly with one of the greatest achievements of Marx and Engels, their work as the outstanding leaders of the International Working Mens Association (the First International, 1864-1876).

As such it contains many of their most important theoretical and political writings—the famous Inaugural Address; the reports to an speeches at the various Congresses of the International; the letters on Ireland; the Addresses on the various crises with which the International was faced. Outstanding amongst these were those on the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune ("The Civil War in France") and the internal ones occasioned by the struggle against the ideas of Proudhon and especially against the disruptive activities of the anarchist Bakunin and his supporters.

The introduction to this volume by the Editor, David Fernbach, is of great interest. Alongside a detailed account of the history of the International, he discusses Marx's attitude to reforms within capitalism, to the role of trade unions, to political action, to "peaceful transition" and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This last especially in the light of the Paris Commune. Finally, he raises the problem of the great delay in the victory of socialism in the advanced capitalist countries. All very topical.

As in previous Introductions he criticises Marx for failing to develop "a satisfactory theory of imperialism and working-class reformism". To these he adds a new criticism, namely that Marx "lacked an adequate theory of capitalism's international dimension"! ! ! Readers will know that Marx could not have developed a theory of modern imperialism. This only began to develop about the time of his death. Both Marx and Engels in their letters to one another repeatedly emphasise that the basis for the "bourgeois outlook" of sections of the British working class lay in Britain's world trade and industrial monopoly.

Reading this book will stimulate interest in the five volumes of "Documents of the First International" which in addition to most of the texts in this book, contain all the Minutes and all the main documents of the International's General Council, published by Lawrence & Wishart at £1.50 per volume.

MAN AND WOMAN

Lawrence and Wishart are publishing this month a new book by Dr. John Lewis—*The Uniqueness of Man*.[5] Marxism is, above all, the scientific theory of "human nature", and this is what this book is about. It is against the hoary idealist theory that "man is a denizen of two worlds"—the worthless material world of our bodies, and the "spiritual" world of mind and human (or divine) values. Lucidly, convincingly and from a strictly scientific standpoint Dr. Lewis shows how it is that *Homo Sapiens* has come to differ so much from any other animal species, in speaking and thinking, in social organisation, in the formation of human personality and the pursuit of human values. He writes about man in the light of modern science—the new theories of matter and the physical-chemical basis of life, and the researches into the evolutionary origins of the human species. At the same time he answers in the most thorough and indeed devastating way the pseudo-scientific arguments being so widely peddled today, that man is only "a naked ape" and that, anyway, our life is nothing but a fortuitous motion of molecules.

In "The Uniqueness of Man" the word "Man" stands for the whole human species, male and female. Lawrence and Wishart are also publishing a new book about Woman—or rather, about one unique woman, Emma Paterson, the pioneer of women's entry into the British trade union movement.[6]

In the 1870s Emma Paterson began to organise working women into a women's Trade Union League. And through her dogged persistence it at length became affiliated to the TUC. At first that exclusively male assembly quailed before the spectre of women attending Congress, and the women had to be represented by a specially designated man. But this was, as Emma knew it would be, the thin end of the wedge. Soon there were women delegates attending the TUC. Today there are two and a half million women members in the affiliated trade unions.

The author, Harold Goldman, is a press officer in the National Union of General and Municipal Workers—into which many of the members of Emma's women's union were subsequently received. And Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC, contributes a Foreword.

---

[5] *The Uniqueness of Man* by John Lewis. Lawrence & Wishart. Paperback £1.90, hardback £3.

[6] *Emma Paterson*, by Harold Goldman. Lawrence & Wishart. Hardback £1.95.

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The Swing from Science and Changes in Contemporary Capitalism

V. C. Marshall and S. Ruhemann

This contribution is based on a paper originally presented by the authors to the 5th Conference of the Communist Party's National University Staffs Advisory Committee, held on December 1st 1973, and on the subsequent discussion. As a consequence the analysis concentrates upon trends within the Universities. The authors believe, however, that the arguments advanced apply to higher education generally. The authors both teach chemical engineering in the University of Bradford).

The Party is Over

The White Paper "Technical Education", published in 1956, quoted in its opening paragraph Sir Anthony Eden, the then Prime Minister, as saying, in a speech at Bradford, ". . . we shall need many more scientists, engineers and technicians. I am determined that this shortage shall be made good". The Paper went on to say:

> "Between 1938 and 1955 the number of university students in arts and science has been doubled . . . more schools and technical colleges have been built. . . . But this is nothing like enough. . . . One industry after another is being compelled to modernise its techniques, knowing that unless new materials are discovered and new methods applied, British industry may fall behind in the race. . . . We face then an intense and rising demand for scientific manpower . . . the prospects are good. . . . The romance of science is catching on. . . . More boys and girls are staying on at school . . . more are taking science, The Government have reviewed the system of technical education in Great Britain. They are resolved that it shall fully match the needs of modern industry and afford every boy and girl the chance of seeing the opportunities which scientific progress is opening before them. This White Paper announces proposals by the Government for a new major advance."

Such was the temper of the mid-1950's.

The picture today is very different. Although, until very recently, the total increase in applications for entry to Further and Higher Education has broadly matched, and in some years exceeded, the expansion of capacity ensuing from the above-mentioned White Paper and the later (1963) Robbins Report, there has developed, over the last ten years and with particular intensity in the last three, a serious imbalance as between the Arts and certain professional courses on the one hand and the Physical Sciences and Engineering on the other. While many courses in the former categories are being heavily over-subscribed, universities and polytechnics are reporting increasing numbers of vacancies in the latter. Thus, between 1972 and 1973 the number of applicants in chemistry has dropped by 16 per cent and those in physics and engineering by 6 to 7 per cent.[1] Latterly there has occurred an absolute decline in the number of UK applicants for admission to universities.[2]

Already in the early sixties, it had begun to appear that the ratio of Arts to Science A-levels was shifting in favour of the former, and that this was being reflected in a short-fall of applications for places in science and technology. Concern over this phenomenon led to the setting up of the Dainton Committee, which was charged with investigating trends, ascertaining cases and making recommendations.

The Findings of the Dainton Committee

The Committee found[3] that the problem was real, and that it was also occurring in other Western (i.e. capitalist) countries though not, apparently, in the socialist countries. They found it difficult to ascertain causes, but pointed to certain academic and social factors. One of these factors was excessive specialisation in schools which, coupled with the rigidity of syllabuses and university entrance requirements, imposed an early choice of A-level subjects (perhaps at age fourteen). They also drew attention to the unsatisfactory state of mathematics teaching. Socially, the Committee felt that science and technology were beginning to suffer from a "bad press", particularly over issues such as the hydrogen

[1] *Times Higher Educational Supplement* (THES), 28 September 1973.

[2] THES, 8 March 1974.

[3] *Enquiry into the flow of candidates in Science and Technology into Higher Education* (The Dainton Report), HMSO, 1968.

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bomb. But lack of any clear understanding of the causes of the "swing" prevented the Committee from proposing convincing remedies.

The following table, taken from Layard and Williams[4], gives one view of the problem. Though the projections by Dainton proved pessimistic, nevertheless, after a flattening off in 1968-1969, the trend has since re-established itself.

Percentage of First-Year Sixth-Formers Studying Arts and Science in England and Wales

	Science group	*Science-cum-arts group*	*Arts group*	*All*
Actual				
1962	41.5	9.9	48.6	100.0
1967	32.4	15.8	52.8	100.0
1968	30.1	17.1	52.8	100.0
1969	30.0	18.6	51.4	100.0
Dainton projection				
1969	27.5	17.7	54.8	100.0
1971	23.5	20.1	56.4	100.0

The Dainton projection was based on "actuals" up to and including 1967.

Fig. 1 shows the general decline in the proportion of applicants for University places who seek them in the areas of science, technology and engineering.

The Trends which Govern Entry into Higher Education

Three main trends determine the size of the entry into departments of science and technology. These are: (1) the demographic trend (the size of the 18-year-old age group) (Fig. 2); (2) the social trend (the proportion of the age group seeking higher education) (Fig. 3)[5]; (3) the science trend (the proportion of those seeking higher education who take science A-levels), i.e. the subject of the Dainton report. In the period prior to Dainton trends (1) and (2) operated at times to obscure trend (3): thus, the combination of the post-war population bulge in the years 1964-66 with a rapid increase in the social demand for higher education produced absolute increases in the numbers of science and engineering entrants in spite of the Dainton swing. From 1966 to 1973 the demographic trend has been downwards, and latterly the social trend has markedly slackened (to some degree it has been deliberately damped down by governmental actions and inactions). Consequently, the physical science and engineering departments are facing a serious crisis, and there is even talk of redundancies.[6] The resumed upward movement of the demographic trend to 1980 may be expected to attenuate the crisis to some extent.

Changes in Capitalist Economy—from Competition to Monopoly

Students of the "swing" tend to approach it from two basic pre-conceptions. The first is that mankind needs more science and engineering, and that their neglect results in social deprivation: the second, perhaps more subtle, is that the interests of mankind and of capitalism in this respect coincide.

The first of these assumptions tends to be regarded as axiomatic, at least as far as the immediately forseeable future is concerned, by all materialists, marxist and non-marxist alike. The second assumption would lead one to expect the present falling supply of scientists to be reflected in greater inducements—higher salaries and better conditions—while the relative over-supply of arts graduates should lead to a diminution of their rewards and employment prospects. Judging by these criteria, however, there is no evidence that capitalism "needs" more scientists and engineers: in fact the latest figures[7] show that starting salaries for scientists have fallen relative to those of arts graduates.

Marxists are not, of course, surprised at this apparent paradox, since they perceived long ago that the contradiction between the needs of capitalism and those of mankind is inherent in the system and constitutes the basic driving force of the struggle for socialism. Nevertheless we need to explore the question further in order to expose the contradiction to the working class and all its potential allies, and thus draw them into the struggle.

Why, then, does capitalism need fewer engineers and scientists? There was of course a long period from the middle of the eighteenth to almost the end of the nineteenth centuries—the era of competition—when the principal task facing capitalism was the development of the productive forces, a process which became increasingly dependent on science. This period ended with the onset of modern imperialism, which is characterised by the merger of bank and industrial capital and by the growth of monopolies, the cartelisation of the market and the super-exploitation of colonial labour. From that time on, as Lenin predicted, there has set in a long-term tendency towards increasing parasitism in capitalist

[4] Layard, R. and Williams, G. *The Scale of Expansion to Come. Patterns & Policies in Higher Education*, Penguin 1971, p. 34.

[5] The figures shown in fig. 3 are not the numbers of those seeking to enter higher education but are the numbers of those qualified to do so.

[6] THES, 29 March 1974. Robson (Professor Hugh), Chairman of Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals.

[7] THES, 28 September 1973.

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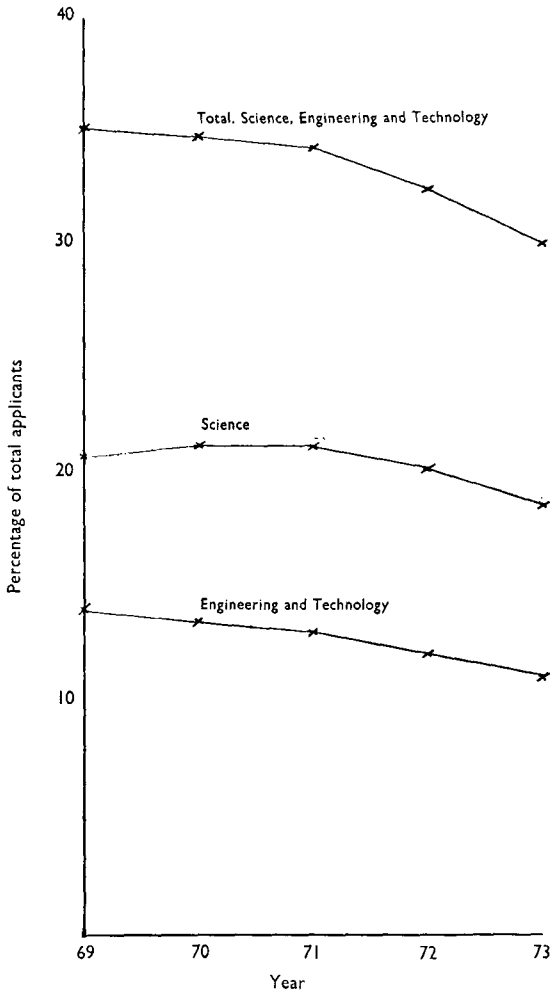
economy, with the accountant and the salesman progressively surpassing in importance the inventor and the producer. This process was eloquently characterised by Lord Bowden, Principal of UMIST, (University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology), in a recent address[8]: ". . . . Most of the real wealth of the community has always been created in factories and in mines and other places where men toil together, but it has become very obvious that too little cash goes today to the men who toil, and too much to men who speculate, men who buy and sell things they have not made. . . ." (The entire address is welll worth reading).

Fig. 1 Percentage of total UK applicants to universities applying for courses in Science, Engineering and Technology

[Source. 11th Report Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA)]



[8] Bowden, Lord, Principal of UMIST *New Scientist*, 17 May, 1973, p. 412.

It is true that the primacy of productive industry, and hence of science and technology, were vigorously reasserted in response to the "emergencies" of the two world wars brought about by imperialism, by the subsequent reconstruction booms and by "competitive coexistence" with socialism: but the very success of these efforts served only to aggravate the eventual crisis of over-production and, as a result there has been in recent years, particularly in the USA, serious unemployment among scientists and technologists. Even the space race, Concorde and the Vietnam war (sic) have not availed to maintain the "white heat of the technological revolution".

Today, as Bowden (*loc cit*) points out, productive industry contributes no more than 35 per cent to the gross national product. We have reached a stage where, within the framework of capitalist economy, the "problem of production" has been superseded by the "problem of marketing": profits are no longer limited by the amount which can be produced, but by the amount which can be sold; increasingly, monopoly capitalism derives greater benefit from increasing the scale of production than it does from innovation. Thus, the great drive in most capitalist concerns is for the expansion of the market: hence the enormous increase in the rate of monopolisation and the gadarene rush into the—appropriately named—"Common Market".

Changes in the Labour Market

Reference has been made above to the fact that the falling supply of scientists has not been reflected in higher starting salaries for entrants into scientific employment. This accords with a number of trends arising from increasing monopolisation. In the first place the decline of competition reduces the incentive to innovation. In the second place there is a physical reduction in the number of establishments conducting research as a result of the processes of "take-over". This latter, in the case of the multinational concerns, is reflected in geographical concentration in the headquarters of the giant monopolies. These trends parallel the concentration of production into fewer and larger units which, because they are more capital-intensive, reduce the number of technologists involved directly in the productive process.

Furthermore, particularly as a result of computerisation, the productivity of technologists has been significantly increased. For example, a computer design for a custom-built pressure vessel can be bought today for about £10 whereas it would take an engineer a week to design such a vessel using traditional methods of calculation.

Today, the most rapidly growing areas for graduate recruitment are banking, insurance, accountancy and marketing, together with such professions as medicine, pharmacy and ophthalmic

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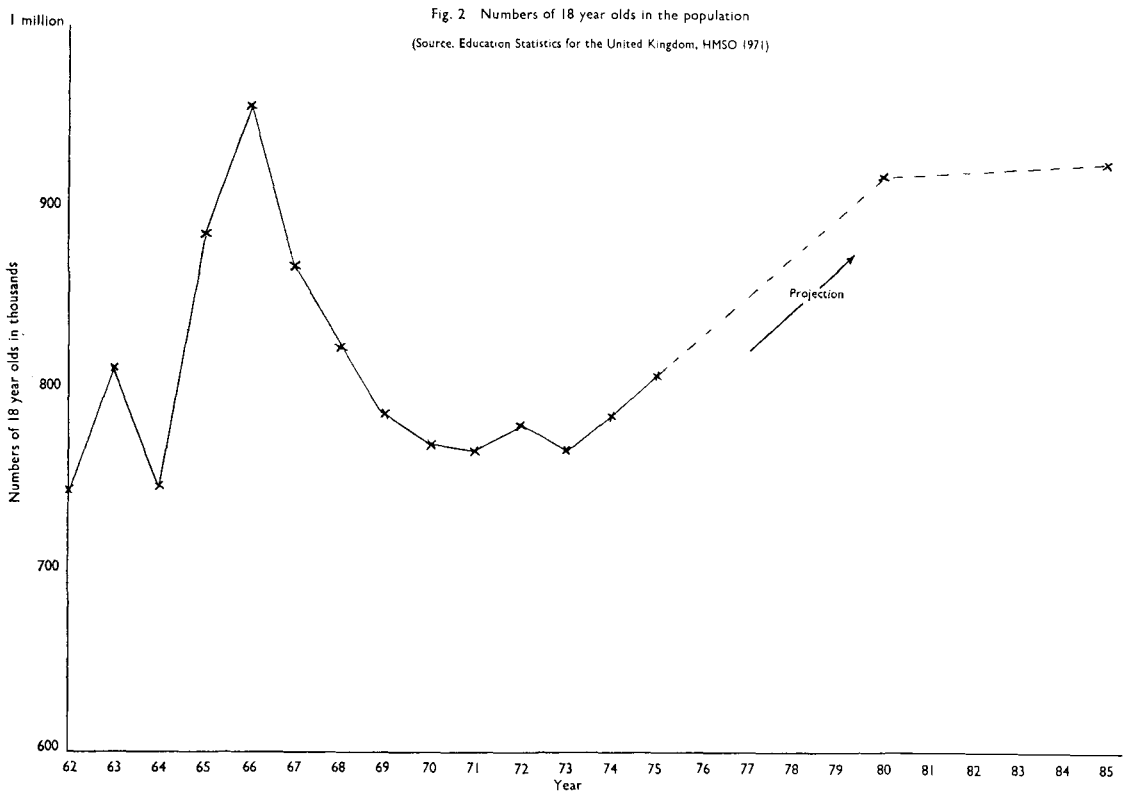

Fig. 2 Numbers of 18 year olds in the population

(Source. Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, HMSO 1971)

optics and, to a certain extent, law, professions which require a highly vocational training. In addition, the growth of state bureaucracy and of the "welfare state" are producing increased employment opportunities in those areas.

The Factors which Influence Choice

There is general agreement that the choice of school courses which determines A-level subjects, and thus the broad areas of university entrance, is made at the age of 14 or 15.

How are these choices conditioned and transmitted to teenagers?

There are three main channels of communication: the school, the home and directly through the mass media, and it is through these channels that the climate of opinion makes its impression, being refracted or distorted according to the particular environment of the child.

The influence of the labour market is important. In the negative sense recent publicity concerned with unemployment of graduates in particular professions has produced immediate reaction against these professions on the part of eighteen-year-olds choosing a university subject. Evidence of a positive character is the rapid growth of applications for those vocationally orientated courses in medicine, pharmacy, etc. discussed above.

That it is the labour market which is the ultimate factor in determining choice is demonstrated by the way in which, over many decades, supply and demand have remained broadly in balance.

Some educationalists will be offended by this assertion, claiming that course choices are determined by the inherent "interest" of subjects and that the achievement of the balance results from a happy accident. It may well be that the connection between course choice and the labour market is not always overt, but it is certain that the academic climate, as a part of the general ideological superstructure of capitalist society, transmits to the potential student a sense of what subjects are socially acceptable or "with it". Insofar as education is directed to the production of cadres for capitalism, this sense will reflect the current state of the labour market. To quote Dean Gaisford, Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford preaching in Christ Church Cathedral some 150 years ago—"The study of Greek literature not only elevates above the vulgar herd but also leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument".

From the time of Jules Verne till the nineteen-fifties, literature reflected the ascendancy of science, with H. G. Wells as its high priest. By way of example C. P. Snow's novel *The Masters* reflects the struggle between the arts and the sciences in the

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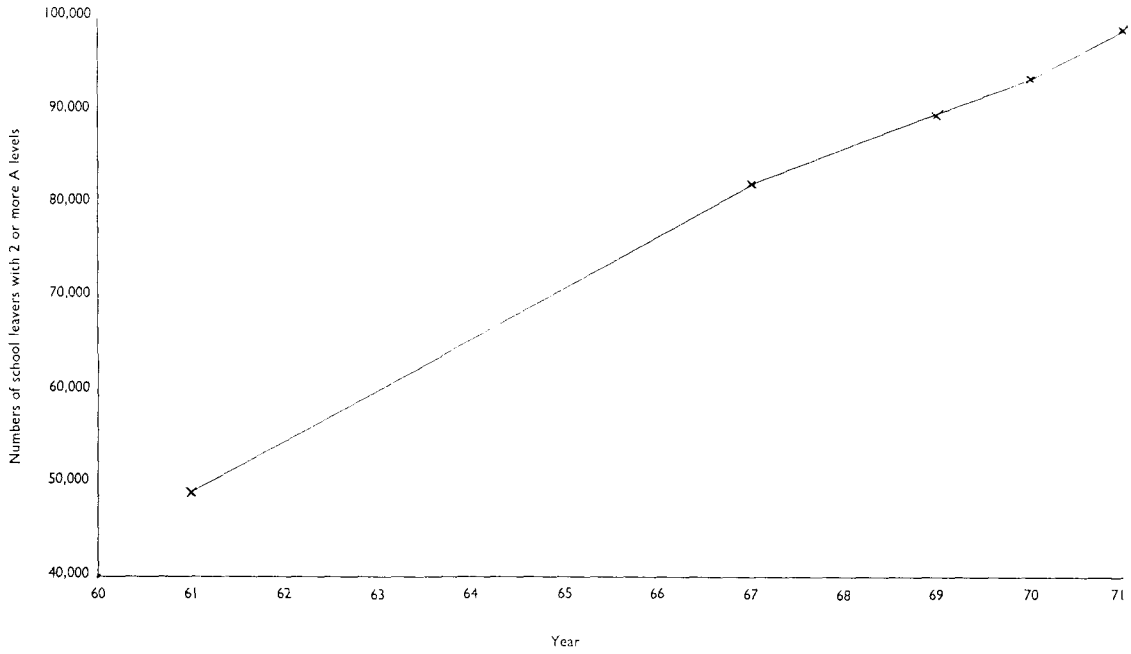
Fig. 3 School leavers with 2 or more A levels

Sources. (1) Educational Statistics for the United Kingdom, HMSO 1971
(2) "Higher Education" [The Robbins Report], HMSO 1973



triumph of the "New Man", the scientist Crawford. Particularly in children's comics and books the scientist or engineer was a hero figure. At the same time science produced leading radical figures such as T. H. Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, Bertrand Russell and J. D. Bernal.

Today however, the picture is different. The hero of fiction is the Madison Avenue "account executive" and, vying with him for popularity, is the drop-out anti-hero of "Midnight Cowboy". There is a strong anti-scientific trend in philosophy, exemplified by the "counter-culture" of Theodore Roszack, and a flood of literature and broadcasting on spiritualism and occultism amounting almost to a campaign against reason. It is startling to compare "The Exorcist" with, say, "Around the World in Eighty Days".

But it would be wrong to deny or ignore the influence of the abuses of science and technology by capitalism, exemplified by Hiroshima and the "Automated Battlefield". It is, and always has been, the plain duty of progressives to criticise these abuses. But root and branch attacks upon science are a totally different matter. Such attacks undermine the materialist basis of working class struggle and open the gates to philosophical idealism and obscurantism. Attacks on science *per se* are not of themselves today attacks on capitalism. If they were the capitalist information media would rush to the defence of science. This they are signally failing to do.

Reference has already been made to the conclusions reached by the Dainton Committee that there were educational factors involved which included too-early specialisation and deficiencies in teaching. In addition others have drawn attention to factors such as lack of imagination in science teaching (which Nuffield was intended to remedy), the small number of girls taking physical science and positive discouragement to them from doing so.

That these factors play a role is not disputed; but that they cannot be dominant is suggested by two considerations. Firstly, they also operated during the period of the ascendancy of science; secondly, if they were primary they should have produced an imbalance in the labour market: that there is no evidence for the existence of such an imbalance has already been noted.

A Revolt against Capitalism

Some on the left have welcomed the swing, seeing in it a "revolt against capitalism" or at least a revolt against the capitalist system of values. As the *Times Educational Supplement* once queried—"Is natural preference once more asserting itself in the face of propaganda?"

It is claimed that both staff and students in the areas of the new arts subjects are more radical than their counterparts in science and technology.

Thus National Opinion Polls reported during the campaign for the last General Election that Arts

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Lecturers showed a bias towards Wilson whereas Science Lecturers preferred Heath (perhaps this ought to be taken *cum grano salis* in view of the noted fallibility of such polls!).[9]

It is also true that social science and other arts students and staff tend to predominate in campus militancy. But this is not the whole story. Some of the most reactionary academics associated with such activities as the publication of "Black Papers", with the creation of the "Independent University" and with general repression come from Arts faculties. Nor is it true that the presence of large numbers of progressives in a particular academic sphere denotes that that sphere is, as a whole, "in revolt". When science was in the ascendency it attracted progressives though, as already has been noted, this was the era in which science objectively rendered great services to capitalism.

It is also not possible to sustain the argument that the swing represents a revolt against "vocationalism" in higher education (often expressed as the revolt against the preparation of students to "fit them into the slots" in the system) since a high proportion of those swinging against science and technology do so by entering those highly vocational courses in medicine, pharmacy, ophthalmic optics and management noted above.

Consequences

What are the consequences for society of the drift from science and technology? The last few years have seen an enormous explosion of concern for the protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources.

We believe that much of this concern is justified, and the Communist Party is now giving a great deal of attention to these questions. As communists, however, we reject the bourgeois solution of "pull up the ladder, I'm alright", which has made of "development" a dirty word and which seeks to impose permanent material deprivation on the majority of mankind including a large part of the population of the so-called "developed" countries. On the contrary, we insist that the raising of living standards for this majority be made the first charge on the massive productive forces which have so far benefited only a minority. It is to the credit of the social sciences that many of their more progressive exponents have played, and still play, an important role in exposing social inequalities and environmental problems and demanding political action to remedy them: but it must be obvious that if both these objectives are to be achieved, we need more science and technology and not less. It is our duty to rouse the working class to struggle on these questions and in the course of the struggle to expose the inability of capitalism to resolve them.

It would be wrong to deny that there are positive aspects to a growth in the service industries. Increased leisure time resulting from enhanced productivity due to science and technology should afford the facilities for mass participation in sport and in the arts. This is bound to lead to an increase in the numbers of those engaged professionally in these spheres. This process, which is already becoming a major feature of life in socialist countries, is bound to occur, if only to a limited extent, in capitalist countries. However, in these countries much activity in the service industries is cosmetic or palliative in character, or benefits only the capitalist class. Whether, and to what extent, these tendencies will lead ultimately to a relative decline in the numbers of specialist scientists and technologists required to satisfy the needs of the people (as opposed to the needs of capitalism) is at present a matter for speculation.

Particularly over the period of the last twelve months, it has become apparent that many of the foundations of the parasitic economy of imperialism have begun to crumble. This applies especially to the energy base, though many other sources of cheap raw materials are no longer assured. In essence, both the concepts of limitless natural resources and of the control of these resources by the imperialist powers are no longer unquestioned. The Third World is beginning to sense its power.

The more far-sighted sections of the ruling classes in the imperialist countries may well seek to revive science and technology to try to grapple with these problems and may do so with some success. They are, however, both economically and ideologically the prisoners of their own past. The basic tendency of the average rate of profit to fall as the organic composition of capital rises, which was the mainspring of imperialism, will cause them increasingly to use the weapons of wage restraint and inflation on the working class. But given the determination of the workers to defend their living standards and the rising trade-union consciousness of scientists and engineers, this is certain to sharpen the class struggle. It may well prove to be the overriding contradiction in the final stage of capitalism.

Conclusions

What then are progressives to do in the light of this situation? They must struggle against the running down of science and technology for the following reasons:—

1. There is a continued need for science and technology to grapple with the problems of poverty and disease which still plague the majority of the world's population, (by no means all of whom live in the "Third World").

[9] National Opinion Polls. *Arts Lecturers prefer Labour, but Scientists opt for Heath*, THES, February 22, 1974.

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2. The problems of environmental pollution and of scarcity need science and engineering for their solution.
3. The running down of science and technology will lead eventually to "economies" throughout higher education. In fact, this is already happening: the savage cuts in building and recurrent grants made by the Tories last year (and only minimally abated by the Labour government) stem directly from the oil crisis—that is to say, from the partial break-down of the parasitic imperialist economy and the failure to develop improved methods of utilisation of oil and alternative energy sources such as coal and nuclear power. It is a paradox, too, that the recent expansion in the arts is based on the wealth created by the working class with the aid of scientific and technological innovation.
4. A critical—not to say marxist—approach to the arts and social studies depends upon the application of scientific method. A science component is therefore essential to a broadly based education.

It is clear that these issues are of concern to the whole progressive movement. They are, however, particularly vital to scientists, engineers and technicians employed in industry, research and education, whose career prospects are bound up with the future development of science and technology. The analysis presented in this article should help to draw these sections into the struggle at both the trade union and political levels.

30 Years After

The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Fascism During the Period 1941-1944

Nikifor Gornenski

The armed struggle of the Bulgarian people against Nazi dependence and the monarcho-fascist dictatorship in the period from 1941 to September 9, 1944, was organised and headed by the Bulgarian Communist Party. From the very first day of the Patriotic War of the Soviet peoples on June 22, 1941, the Bulgarian Communist Party issued an appeal, calling upon the Bulgarian people to wage an irreconcilable struggle against the Nazi-fascist forces in the name of the freedom and independence of the country. The Party saw the possibility of achieving this aim in mutual assistance and comradeship-in-arms with the Red Army, the fraternal Soviet Union and all the fighting peoples. On June 24 the Party specified the bodies, the forms and means for waging an armed struggle. A Central Military Commission was set up in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, as well as district military commissions in the district Party committees. The Party issued an appeal for the formation of partisan detachments and combat groups; the work of revolutionising the mass of soldiers, and uniting all anti-fascist forces in a unified militant alliance was also to be put in hand.

The policy of an armed struggle adopted by the Bulgarian Communist Party at the very outset of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union indicated that the Party was accomplishing in a Leninist way the tasks by which both it and the country were faced. It was simultaneously defending the national and the international interests of the working class. The struggle of the Bulgarian people against imperialist domination, for freedom and democracy, was inseparable from the struggle of the Bulgarian proletariat for socialism. But this struggle was inconceivable without comradeship-in-arms with the Red Army. That is why the police, who were trying to wreck the Party policy by all possible means, were obliged to note that in June 1941 the Bulgarian Communist Party undertook the "most resolute and daring actions leading to the preparation of an armed uprising", that its work was initiated as early as "August and September and reached all strata of society".

The Bureau in Exile of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, headed by Georgi Dimitrov, played a tremendous role in the organisation and leadership of the armed struggle in the country. With Soviet help it set up the Hristo Botev radio-station, which began to broadcast on July 23, 1941; the radio-station "Naroden glas" (People's Voice) was organised in the autumn of the same year. Thus the Bureau in Exile established radio communication with the Bulgarian Communist Party,

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the Young Workers League and all anti-fascists in Bulgaria. Through these radio-stations it broadcast correct information on the war and the united front of the peoples headed by the Soviet Union; headed, guided and inspired the whole anti-fascist resistance in Bulgaria. Its instructions were written down by communists and members of the Young Workers' League and were published in underground bulletins, newspapers and appeals, a broader circle of Bulgarian patriots became familiar with them, their actions in the people's resistance and armed struggle being thus intensified.

A Heavy Toll

In August and September 1941 the Bureau in Exile of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party organised, again with Soviet help, the return to Bulgaria of several groups of political emigres—a total of over 50 persons. Some of them perished as soon as they set foot on Bulgarian soil. Others dedicated their energies, revolutionary and combat experience, and their blood, for a longer or a shorter period of time, to the armed struggle of their people.

The Party paid a heavy toll in setting up the first partisan detachments, combat groups and underground soldiers' committees. In 1941, 769 fighters were killed, torn from the ranks of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Young Workers League and another 3,185 shared the same fate in 1942. Some of them were arrested and imprisoned, and others were tortured to death in police stations and prisons. The Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party lost its secretary, Anton Ivanov, and five of its fellow-workers; Peter Bogdanov, Nikola Vaptsarov, Georgi Minchev, Atanas Romanov and Anton Popov. The Central Military Commission lost its leader, Tsvyatko Radoynov, and the movement for Bulgarian-Soviet friendship its fearless militant General Vladimir Zaimov.

However, the heavy blows dealt to it did not prevent the Bulgarian Communist Party from continuing to play its role of organiser, leader and inspirer of the armed struggle. On July 17, 1942, the Hristo Botev radio-station broadcast the programme of the Fatherland Front laid down by the Bureau in Exile of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on the initiative of Georgi Dimitrov. The most important tasks outlined in it were: driving the Nazi forces out of Bulgaria, overthrowing the monarcho-fascist dictatorship, setting up a people's democratic government, forming an alliance with the fraternal USSR and co-operating with its allies. On the following day the Bulgarian Communist Party began to work devotedly and selflessly to rally the masses round the banner of the Fatherland Front and to implement its salutary programme. Over 100 Fatherland Front Committees were set up by the end of 1942 and underground appeals, leaflets and bulletins were published. The first issue of the newspaper *Fatherland Front* was also published.

The Bulgarian Communist Party thus built the militant alliance of the anti-fascist forces, which was of vital importance for Bulgaria's salvation. It would have been inconceivable to organise the anti-fascist resistance and the armed struggle without the Fatherland Front. It reflected the political development of events. The legend about the "Blitzkrieg" and the invincibility of the Nazi forces was discredited by the favourable impact of the victories of the Soviet Army and the political activity of the working people was intensified. On this occasion the Nazis sent official letters to the Police Headquarters in Sofia. "Particularly animated activity of the Fatherland Front," read one of them, "was observed in Bourgas and Sofia. It found expression in wrecking, attacks on and murders of German soldiers."

The Impact of Stalingrad

The historical victory of the Soviet Army at Stalingrad marked the beginning of a radical change in the war, it encouraged and intensified the struggle of the oppressed peoples. It caused a powerful influx into the partisan movement in our country. In February 1943 the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party drew up a directive concerning the conversion of the armed struggle into an uprising, and specified its basic forces, aims and slogans.

In March and April 1943 the Central Committee of the Party divided the country into 12 zones of insurgent operations (Z10)—each one of them with headquarters of its own and a general staff. Thus, the foundations of the People's Liberation Insurgent Army were laid and a new structure and organisation of the armed struggle was secured corresponding to the new stage of its development. A largescale people's partisan war began to be waged. According to estimates made by the Nazi military intelligence over 1,800 partisan actions and attacks were carried out in Bulgaria in 1943. The insurgent army withstood the attacks of a 20,000-strong army and police force sent against it in the Sredna Gora Mountain Range in the spring of 1943; it also parried the attack of a 100,000-strong military and police force sent against it in the winter of 1943-44 to stamp out the armed struggle. The bloody terror, the murder of whole families of partisan auxiliaries did not bring the people to their knees before fascism; it did not crush their will for a courageous and heroic struggle.

In the spring of 1944 the Red Army liberated Odessa in the Crimea and came closer to the Danube. Its victories gave a fresh powerful impetus to the partisan movement. In April and May 1944

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the Bulgarian Communist Party set up the first People's Liberation brigades, increased the number of detachments and groups, and intensified their activities. The Party exposed the government headed by Ivan Bagryanov which came to power on June 1, 1944 with the task of deluding the people by means of demagogic promises about neutrality and peace, and of diverting them from the path of the armed struggle. The partisan detachments responded to its manoeuvres by an unprecendented increase in the number of their actions.

The victorious march of the Red Army on the Balkan Peninsula and the liberation of Romania from fascist bondage engendered a new wave of revolutionary upsurge in the country. On August 26, 1944, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party sent out its Circular Letter No. 4, instructing the Party organisations to make the final preparations and to draw the masses into a decisive struggle.

The Bulgarian Communist Party also exposed the policy of the last bourgeois government of K. Mouraviev and organised mass demonstrations, strikes and public meetings. When the Soviet Union declared war on monarcho-fascist Bulgaria on September 5, 1944, the revolutionary forces gained the upper hand over the enemy. Their activities and the actions of the insurgent army were spreading irresistibly over the whole country. During the night of September 8, the Party dealt the principal blow to the central authorities in Sofia. By the evening of September 9, 1944 the people's uprising was victorious on a nationwide scale.

A People's Government

A people's democratic government of the Fatherland Front was set up under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The road lay open for socialist construction.

The victory of September 9, 1944, won with the decisive help of the Red Army had been prepared and forged in a merciless struggle against the enemy, under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The Party organised and directed the armed struggle, created a political army of the anti-fascist revolution, united the patriotic forces in a unified militant alliance, the Fatherland Front, and built up its striking force, the National Liberation Insurgent Army, revolutionised the mass of soldiers and got them to join the insurgents' struggle in Bulgaria and in the neighbouring countries.

The Bulgarian Communist Party had kept up the high fighting spirit of the masses and their stability in the face of the atrocities of fascist terrorism and to the widespread Nazi propaganda. It inspired the partisan auxiliaries to fight steadfastly in spite of arrests, beatings, internments, torture in concentration camps and prisons, in spite of the mass

murder of unarmed people, in spite of the murder of 20,070 auxiliaries and members of their families, children, teenagers, boys and girls, old women and men. The Bulgarian Communist Party had inspired the partisan detachments and combat groups to fight until victory was won, in spite of the heavy toll paid: 9,140 fighters and commanders killed. The Party had indicated to the whole people the salutary path to follow: the armed struggle and comradeship-in-arms with the Soviet people and the Red Army, the peoples of the neighbouring countries and other democratic countries against the common enemy and oppressor.

Following this path of suffering and sacrifices the Bulgarian Communist Party led the Bulgarian people to the dawn of freedom 30 years ago. And merited their boundless love, gratitude and confidence.

Frank Thompson

Doing his international duty honestly and bravely an Englishman, Major Frank Thompson, also gave his life for Bulgaria's freedom in the heroic resistance against fascism. The story of his life, especially the last years, is full of trials and features of enormous moral strength. And his life as a fighter on Bulgarian soil, which led him to the ranks of Second Sofia Partisan Brigade arouses real admiration. It was not predetermined by any accidental set of circumstances, but by profound ideological convictions.

When he was 18 years old and a student at Oxford University, Frank Thompson became a member of the British Labour Party and later on, member of the British Communist Party. During the Second World War, in late January 1944, having made a parachute jump and having landed near the

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village of Dobro Pole, Southern Serbia, he established contact with Bulgarian partisans He had come as an aide to the chief of the British military mission in that area, Major Davis. Davis was killed during an operation against the Nazi occupiers carried out on a vast scale. Together with a group of Bulgarian partisans Frank Thompson saved himself by what seemed a miracle; he remained covered by deep snow together with his wireless set, for many hours.

Several days later he established radio communications with the staff of the Allies in Cairo; having informed him that he had been promoted to the rank of major, they instructed him to continue his participation in the Bulgarian resistance movement. In April, 1944 the partisans waged heavy struggles against the occupiers on Yugoslav territory. Major Thompson made efforts to secure British weapons for them, by plane. Upon instructions from the staff of the People's Liberation Insurgent Army the Bulgarian partisans headed for Bulgaria for the purpose of establishing a free zone in the Sredna Gora Mountain range. Thus, together with nearly 300 partisans, Frank Thompson moved on fighting continuously from Yugoslav to Bulgarian territory. Reaching Bulgarian territory the large partisan detachment moved in open order without cover.

But when they crossed the railway line near Prokopnik railway station (today Frank Thompson railway station) the partisan detachment was surrounded by military and gendarmerie units which far outnumbered it. Fighting began, after which the partisan detachment reached the village of Batoulia and took cover in a forest. One of the detachment's fiercest fights against the military and police forces took place there and it dispersed in groups. Major Frank Thompson, together with the Bulgarian national heroine Yordanka Nikolova, sergeant Scott (a radio operator) and several other Bulgarian partisans, withdrew to the west of the encirclement. However, surrounded again, somewhat later he fought bravely till he used his last bullet. He was captured and taken to the village of Eleshnits where he was subjected to long and painful interrogations.

The fascist commanders were assisted by the fact that Frank Thompson spoke excellent Bulgarian. He suggested that they should treat him as a prisoner-of-war since he wore the uniform of an officer of the British Army. His proposal was ignored. He was turned over to one of the most brutal commanders of the gendarme unit in the village of Litakovo, Botevgrad county. When the fascist army officer accused him of having come to overthrow the Bulgarian state, Thompson said coolly: "I am here because in this war there is something far exceeding the struggle of one nation against another. The most important thing in the world now is the struggle of the anti-fascists against fascism!"

Thompson paid dearly for his statement—the gendarmes fell on him and tortured him brutally. After that, during one of the interrogations, he made a brave revelation, saying: "I am a communist!" It was for this reason that, together with two Bulgarian anti-fascists, he was shot at a place called "Kaleto" (the Fort) several days later.

Major Frank Thompson was 24 years old, but the enthusiasm of his youth, his striving for and dreams of a life free from any violence inspired him to perform such a feat—a feat which is most fittingly explained by the following quatrain of his poem *Epitaph to My Comrades*!

". . . write not on stone a single word of grief—
but only happiness deserved,
for we, who wanted most of life,
knew also how to give our lives."

Major Frank Thomson died on June 10, 1944, shot through by bullets from fascist submachine guns, but he has remained alive forever in the minds of the Bulgarian people. A railway station near his grave has been named after him and will remain so forever.

50th Anniversary of the General Strike

Decisions on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the General Strike have been taken by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party, by the Editorial Board of *Marxism Today* and by the Directors of Lawrence & Wishart.

Amongst the decisions are:–

(1) Publication by Lawrence & Wishart (with the help of the History Group of the Communist Party) of a book on General Strike composed of essays, memories and original studies.

(2) A special issue of *Marxism Today* to be published in March 1976, as well as special material to be published in other sections of the Party Press.

(3) A Communist Party pamphlet to be written by James Klugmann.

(4) Plans for a number of reprints of books, pamphlets and other material published at the time of the General Strike, including visual material.

We would be very glad to hear from readers of *Marxism Today* who have personal memories of the General Strike, or material published during the strike which could be used in one or other of the publications that are being prepared.

Would they please write to James Klugmann, c/o *Marxism Today*.

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The Workers' Theatre in the Thirties

Len Jones

(Dr. L. A. Jones is a Dozent (Senior Lecturer) at the Karl Marx University, Leipzig, GDR. He did his thesis on "The British Workers' Theatre, 1917-35" and is now working on stylistics.)

At this time, when the working-class, democratic and national liberation movements in many countries of the world are moving forward with unparalleled confidence in the task of building popular fronts against imperialism and war, it may be instructive to look back upon a time when the same task was undertaken with a similar enthusiasm but was in the event not attended by the same measure of immediate success. This was the period of the thirties, when the struggle in Britain and other countries of Europe, Asia and America against fascism and war raised the popular, democratic movements to a level insufficient indeed to prevent the outbreak of a second world war, but adequate to settle that war in an anti-fascist manner and set the stage for the new round of struggles for democracy and peace, in the pursuance of which important and far-reaching successes are being scored with every year that passes. Unfortunately the historiography of especially the cultural movements of the thirties, has—with one important exception—been left to writers like Stephen Spender, Julian Symonds and Arthur Koestler, who have belittled these movements. The exception referred to is the book by Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, entitled *The Thirties*.

Alongside the Left Book Club, the great cultural expression of the movement to build a broad popular front of all democratic forces in Britain in the thirties was of course Unity Theatre, London, and the hundreds of Left Theatre Groups that sprang up in London and the provinces from 1936 onwards. The story of how this was done has never been told in detail and the British working-class movement still awaits an authoritative and properly documented history of Unity Theatre. It cannot be the purpose of this article to supply this want. What it aims to show is that the phenomenon of Unity did not suddenly spring into full growth, but emerged after many years (in fact, a decade) of hard work, of trial and error, but its forerunner, the Workers' Theatre Movement.

The Workers' Theatre Movement was formed out of various small London groups in the period 1926-7 and was never more than a small organisation with a few constituent groups in London and the provinces. But during the early years of its existence it presented to working-class audiences performances of plays which in artistic value and political significance were out of all proportion to the WTM's lack of magnitude.

The post-war revolutionary wave that reached its peak in 1926 found an artistic reflection in the creative work of the WTM. A genuine working-class dramatist, the Scottish miner Joe Corrie, wrote his *In Time o' Strife*, based on the experiences of the working class during the General Strike, for the WTM. A whole series of promising pieces flowed from the pen of its energetic secretary, H. B. ("Tom") Thomas, who was the first to make a dramatised version of the *Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, the forerunner of a better version, based on the complete text and performed by Unity, London, after the second world war.

Then came his *Women of Khirbinsk* showing something of the role played by women in the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, his *The Fight Goes On* dealing with the aftermath of the General Strike, and a satire on the current political situation called *Malice in Plunderland*. These productions, together with others including adaptations of themes by Upton Sinclair represent a highly creditable achievement for the WTM in the relatively short period 1926-9. The WTM had no theatre of its own and took its performances wherever it could find an audience—to pubs and clubs, local Labour halls and the like. The new plays that the WTM produced and its readiness to find an audience almost anywhere led to a new, very positive feature in its work—the closing of the gap between players and audience. For example, at the end of *R.T.P.* the audience is directly appealed to as if it were the body of a meeting to endorse a resolution in favour of socialism. Furthermore, with its Russian Song Scena and a new revue, *Strike Up*, the WTM made a beginning with new forms of entertainment using music and dance.

Agit. Prop.

Then at the beginning of the thirties came a radical switch away from stage drama to street drama—to agit. prop. The basic cause for the abandonment of the promising lines so far pursued must

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be sought first of all in the objective political situation. The post-war decade, with all its fluctuations, had in general been one of instability for capitalism, of hope foi the workers in the achievement of a better social order. But after the defeat of the General Strike and the disatrous showing of the Second Labour Government, the post-war revolutionary wave ebbed away completely as capitalism was able to stabilise itself.

The Labour Movement suffered defeat and betrayal. The very small Communist Party proved unable materially to alter the situation. Expulsion from the Labour Party, the Black Circular, bans and proscriptions, and a mounting campaign of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda tended inevitably to drive it into a corner. Great as was the achievement of the foundation of a national daily newspaper, the *Daily Worker,* in January 1930, the Communist Party remained numerically small and theoretically too weak to cope successfully with all the problems that were thrust upon it. Its isolated position led to sectarian tendencies. Since most of the WTM's members were also members of the Communist Party or close sympathisers, it was natural that the WTM itself should be affected by the isolation and sectarianism of the revolutionary movement it supported. But sectarianism was not purely a British error—it was reflected in the parties and agit. prop. theatres of many other countries and carried thence into the recently founded International Workers' Dramatic Union (IWDU).

Contacts in the early thirties with the German workers' theatre and the IWDU undoubtedly reinforced the leftist swing of the WTM towards an exclusive emphasis on agit. prop. It is interesting to note that at the first congress of the IWDU in June 1930 it was the Russian comrades, with their much greater wealth of experience in playing to popular audiences, who warned the German, English and other delegations against exclusive concentration on agit. prop. to the detriment of accepted forms of the drama. And the International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers which took place in Kharkov in November 1930 expressly warned against both rightist and leftist deviations in the cultural and political work of its members.

The average agit. prop. piece was a mass declamation for a small group of players, dealing with a single political issue and ending invariably in a slogan reiterated with maximum decibel-output. That a short sketch for enlivening a political meeting need not include all the worst features of agit. prop. as often practised by the WTM is readily conceded, and with experience the movement learnt to improve its technique. But the abandonment of the whole tradition of English and indeed world drama was a fundamental mistake which led to the impoverishment of all the WTM's work.

The WTM, still influenced by the Proletcult which was already being overcome in the Soviet Union and in other countries, confused the *negation* of bourgeois culture with the *destruction* of bourgeois culture. It did not seem to understand that the working class can make no contribution to art, science or any other field of human endeavour unless it takes over all that is best in previously-existing class culture.[1]

The wholesale rejection of the tradition of English drama arose of course from a correct instinct in condemning the existing bourgeois theatre. Here however a second mistake arose. The WTM refused to see any good at all in the existing practice of the drama, refused to learn from the professional bourgeois theatre or make contact with whoever or whatever was progressive in it. This condemned the WTM to an extreme form of amateurism which seriously impaired its work qualitatively. In particular the notion that collective authorship could always and everywhere replace skilled writers lowered the whole level of the written material. To develop a workers' theatre, specialists are needed in all fields, and first and most important of all in the creation of a suitable repertoire. This does not mean that collective authorship is a bad thing, but it should not have blinded the WTM to the fact that authorship is also and more propertly a matter for specialists who have to be found or trained.[2]

Mistaken Rejections

The over-emphasis on agit. prop. carried to its extremity the divorce between entertainment and instruction, the unity of which is essential for the

[1] " This is what we must bear in mind when, for example, we talk about proletarian culture. Unless we clearly understand that only by an exact knowledge of the culture created by the whole development of mankind and that only by reshaping this culture can a proletarian culture be built, we shall not be able to solve this problem. Proletarian culture is not something that has sprung nobody knows whence, it is not an invention of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture. That is all nonsense. Proletarian culture must be the result of a natural development of the stores of knowledge which mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalist society, landlord society and bureaucratic society." V. I. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Youth Leagues,* in Selected Works, London 1937, Vol. 9, pp. 470-1.

[2] "The whole of the culture left behind by capitalism must be taken over and socialism built on the basis of it. The whole of science, technology, all branches of knowledge, and art must be taken over, otherwise we cannot build up the life of a communist society. This science, technology and art lies in the hands and heads of the specialists." V. I. Lenin, *Successes and Difficulties of Soviet Power,* April 1919, in Collected Works, German Edition, Berlin 1961, Vol. 29, p. 55. (My translation—LAJ.)

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drama, as for all art. This unity has been recognised as indispensable by the theoreticians of the bourgeoisie in its revolutionary phase,[3] but it was betrayed by the bourgeoisie once its revolutionary phase was over; more and more the entertainment side only was stressed, and this in the case of the British bourgeoisie fell into extreme vulgarity. The WTM, rightly rejecting the vulgarity of the worst kinds of bourgeois theatre, fell into the other extreme, rejecting entertainment and concentrating one-sidely on instruction.

Thus plot, character and even the dialogue itself fell victims to agit. prop. didactictism. Within the compass of short scenes, the plot—in Aristotle's words, finally conceded by Brecht, the "soul of the drama"—was reduced to the most meagre of outlines, which could not reproduce the conflicts of real life. As for the characters, these were replaced by caricatures giving a false impression of the people and classes they were supposed to represent. It is clear that once plot and character have been reduced to their crudest elements, a stage-piece loses its real life and its dialogue must degenerate accordingly and tend to be nothing more than a lead-in to the final slogans.

The destruction of the main elements of the drama left it a crude and primitive thing, possessing only the "form" of agit. prop. The latter thus became an inverted kind of the formalism that the WTM found and rejected in the bourgeois theatre.[4] It was seen as the immediate means of solving political problems. Robbed of its own nature, the agit. prop. drama was cast in the role of political agitator, its purpose narrowed down to the barest political utilitarianism. Here it often fell into the bathos of smartalick humour or revolutionary romanticism of a cheap kind.

In his statement on international repertoire to the 2nd Plenum of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatres (IURT—the successor of the IWDU) Arthur Pieck had criticised what he called "Hurrah-sozialismus". It was also known as the "red happy end". Now in the desperate years 1930-33 it was absolutely necessary to restore the morale of the working masses, to point to the successes of the USSR, the advance of the world proletarian movement and its prospects of success, and particularly to the real possibility of building a victorious united front against fascism and war. But the prospects of success had to be based on a real estimation of class forces and on a real analysis of problems facing the working class, and these complicated questions had to be dealt with on platform and stage.

The agit. prop. forms of the WTM, largely eviscerated by the removal of all genuinely dramatic elements, could not possibly deal with these complicated questions and show why a successful outcome of the struggle between imperialism and socialism was inevitable.

Dramatic Creation Obstructed

The canonisation of the agit. prop. method laid an axe to the very roots of dramatic creation. It was an illusion to believe that the subordination of art to propaganda would aid the political struggle. The drama can impart no real, deep-going understanding, in the sense that an audience is deeply moved to think over and feel the necessity of acting to transform man's condition, unless the real artistic task of portraying and interpreting man's condition is achieved. This means that the roots of human conduct must be exposed in all their depth and complexity as growing out of the social, economic and political conditions of society itself. The sectarianism which rejected all inherited conceptions of art except the narrowly didactic turned into its own (apparent) opposite—opportunism. For the sake of immediate tactical advantages—and these were highly questionable—the strategic role of the drama as a cultural force which could help man to change himself as it moved him to change his condition, was totally abandoned.

The persistence of the WTM in these artistic mistakes in the years 1930-33 seriously hampered its development. But not all of its material was levelled down to the barest agit. prop. elements: in fact, the effort to write playlets often broke through. And help was forthcoming from various sources. In the summer of 1933 the IURT held a dramatic "Olympiad" in Moscow, in which the WTM participated. The international jury made a detailed criticism of the WTM's work and offered important advice. Also present at the Olympiad was a young professional producer named Andre van Gyseghem, who on his return to England appeared frequently before large audiences to give reports on the Olympiad and on the Soviet Theatre. Every one of his appearances was received with great interest and

[3] "Revolutionary bourgeois aesthetics, founded by the great figures of the Enlightenment like Diderot and Lessing, defines the theatre as a place of entertainment and instruction." Bertolt Brecht, *On Experimental Theatre,* printed in supplement to *Theater der Zeit,* Berlin, April 1959, p. 5. (My translation—LAJ.) Also Handel, speaking of his audience, said, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them—I want to make them better." Quoted from O. E. Deutsch, *Handel, a Documentary Biography,* London 1955, p. 855.

[4] "There is something in the theory and practice of the agit. prop. theatre that makes a virtue of primitivism. The insistence on simple forms, on banishing scenery, lighting-effects, make-up and even expert acting—all this smacks very much of formalism gone wrong." N. Buchwald, *Narrowing the Field of the Workers' Theatre,* in Workers' Theatre, New York, October 1931, p.8.

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was instrumental in winning new members for the WTM.

Serious evaluation of its own experiences, the comradely criticism and advice of the IURT and the help of professionals like Andre van Gyseghem helped the WTM to overcome its weaknesses and transform itself into a real workers' theatre, which saw the correct relationship between the tactical and strategic functions of the drama.

A healthy controversy broke out in the ranks of the WTM. In an article contributed to its bulletin for September–October 1933, a non-member tried to outline what he considered was the way forward for the WTM. Some of his remarks were not very clear, but he had grasped a number of essential points. He said that what the WTM was doing was not genuine agit. prop. but a form of expressionism; and he called for a return to "realism and representation on a simple basis". He made the following his main point:

> "We find that there is a fairly large number of working-class dramatic organisations in the country, associated with the Labour Party, Co-op., etc., as well as a number of semi-working class and petit-bourgeois groups, amateur dramatic associations and so forth. Even when these groups are middle-class in composition, they sometimes contain, or are capable of being captured by, radical-thinking persons of semi-revolutionary or advanced views. Naturally most of the plays they select are fairly realistic and straightforward. Yet many are waiting, even if unconsciously, for a new lead. Many would welcome plays expressing a definite anti-war, anti-fascist, socialist point of view. Any organisation that would bring such plays to their notice would gain a reputation. Also, it would be beneficial to the broad movement that such plays should be put about and performed by amateur societies of ability."[5]

The essence of this article is a recognition of the importance to the working class of a "united front" leading to a "people's front"; and of the need to move closer to the masses by abandoning the inverted formalism of agit. prop. as hitherto practised and returning to realism. How sound the writer's instinct was, was amply demonstrated by the historical developments of the next few years. As the decade proceeded ever greater sections of the professional and middle classes were drawn towards the most advanced sections of the working class in a common struggle for democracy, social advance and peace. The conditions for the establishment of a great popular front in Britain were ripening.

This new feature in the political situation was especially noticeable in the intellectual field. As Allen Hutt observed in his *Post-War History of the British Working Class*:-

> "The Communists were attracting into their ranks or into whole-hearted participation in the drive for unity against war and Fascism the most significant and able elements in the intellectual life of the nation."[6]

Among these elements were the outstanding poets and writers of their day, men like W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis and Christopher Isherwood, some of whom formed in 1933 the Group Theatre.

The Group Theatre

It is not intended here for reasons of space to give a full account of the work of this theatre but only to point out its influence on the further development of the workers' theatre. The Group Theatre of Auden and his friends was obviously inspired by the success of the New York Group Theatre, which, starting out as a branch of the Theatre Guild, had become an independent professional repertory company in 1931. It produced the plays of Clifford Odets and adopted the Stanislavsky method of acting.

All the writers of the London Group Theatre were Public School and Oxford or Cambridge, bourgeois in origin and, at first, in outlook. The mass struggles of the early thirties brought them nearer to the working class yet in rather an intellectual way, so that elements of Marxism were, in their works, somewhat crudely imposed on older, non-Marxist attitudes. But what is important about the plays they wrote and produced in the Group Theatre is that they dared to put a Marxist or semi-Marxist view upon the stage at all, and thay they strove to find new, or rediscover old, dramatic devices to achieve what they were after.

In collaboration, Auden and Isherwood wrote plays that were later taken up by various Left Theatre groups and presented in various parts of the country: they were *The Dog Beneath the Skin, The Ascent of F6* and *On the Frontier*. But perhaps the best example of the Group Theatre's work was Stephen Spender's *The Trial of a Judge*. The scene is set in Germany. A liberal-minded judge is trying two cases of murder. In the one case he sees quite clearly that the Jew, Petra, has been murdered by Nazi thugs, while in the other, that the accused Communists have only acted in self-defence. He accordingly convicts the Nazis and acquits the Communists. This judgment he reverses, however, under pressure from his wife, a neurotic and fanatical supporter of the Nazis, and "for reasons of state".

[5] *I Look at the W.T.M., by One who is not a Member*, WTM Bulletin 5, pp. 19-23.

[6] A. Hutt, *A Post-War History of the British Working Class*, London 1937, p. 244.

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The Nazis come to power. They indict the judge for having dared even to voice the possibility that the Nazis could be guilty of murder. The judge fails to put up any effective resistance to the Nazis. The Nazi section of the chorus is jubilant, but the choral opposition, led by the Communists, is given the last line of the play: "We shall be free. We shall find peace."

This was the most consistent and far-reaching attempt so far made to deal poetically and dramatically with one of the most serious of contemporary issues—could a Liberal remain "liberal" when confronted with Fascism? No brief agit. prop. treatment, no matter how admirably done, could have probed and exposed the weakness of the liberal position, so widespread not only among the middle class but also among large sections of Britain's working class.

Positive Features

The Group Theatre had its limitations, but it also had positive features likely to be of value for the development of a working-class theatre. For the first time a whole group of leading professional writers had identified themselves with the working class in the common struggle against Fascism and war and were employing their very considerable talents in the service of that struggle. They showed that poetry, drama and dramatic poetry which dealt with the serious political issues of the times could be effective, and could open out new possibilities for the theatre; they showed that the breach—now chronic on the British stage—between dramatic art and life itself could be closed and they contributed to the strengthening of the bonds which were beginning to unite almost all ranks of society in opposition to Fascism and war.

Moreover, they made valuable theatrical experiments with all kinds of entertainment forms (e.g., music hall and cabaret) in order to communicate their message. They sought to approach the social play with a mixture of traditional British dramatic features and popular forms of mass entertainment. They showed the absolute necessity of full dramatic treatment of social and political themes. Their versatility was not lost on those who were to carry the popular theatre movement forward.

Perhaps even more significant for the future of the British workers' theatre than the somewhat precious Group Theatre was the work of the aforementioned Andre van Gyseghem at the Embassy Theatre in Hammersmith.[7] This small professional theatre was threatened with bankruptcy, but was rescued by its progressive and enterprising business manager, Ronald Adam, who enrolled two thousand audience members by offering them tickets at reduced prices. Van Gysegham became his producer. Paul Robeson then at the height of his popularity, agreed to play at the Embassy for the maximum salary which that theatre could afford—£10 per week—and appeared on van Gyseghem's production of Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1933). Van Gysegham also produced Hans Chlumberg's *Miracle at Verdun,* which inspired Irwin Shaw to write his anti-war play *Bury the Dead,* subsequently played by London Unity Theatre and by various groups of the Left Theatre all over the country.

Van Gyseghem was a prime mover in the foundation of the "Left Theatre", not to be confused with the groups that subsequently grew up in association with the Left Book Club and inspired generally by London Unity, but an association of professional artists, which produced Friedrich Wolf's *Sailors of Catarro* in 1934, the play about the mutiny in the Austrian Navy in 1918.[8]

The Left Theatre

The formation of the Left Theatre in January 1934 was dealt with in the WTM Bulletin by Tom Thomas,[9] who became a member of its committee. He said it was not a rival to the WTM but a professional association dedicating itself to the service of the working class, to the representation of that class upon the stage, and to performance in working-class areas. Its example and professional skill would inspire worker-actors to improve their acting and production technique and help to lift the whole level of the revolutionary theatre movement.

This was an excellent development. However, the materials available to the present writer do not show what was the Left Theatre's next step. It does not seem to have given any more independent productions, but to have piled its forces into the foundation of London's Unity Theatre (January 1936), in which Andre van Gyseghem and Herbert Marshall[10] were two leading spirits.

[7] Details are taken from an article signed "M.S." which appeared in *International Theatre,* Moscow 1934, No. 2, pp. 57-8.

[8] "The work of the Left Theatre began on Sunday at the rarely-used Phoenix Theatre, when they performed Friedrich Wolf's extremely realistic play on the attempt at an uprising in the Austrian Fleet. When the red flag was raised, young enthusiasts from the excited audience greeted the players with stormy applauce." Quoted from the *Stage* in *International Theatre,* Moscow, October 1934, Nos. 3-4, p. 56.

[9] Article *Left Theatre,* WTM Bulletin, April/May 1934, pp. 5-7.

[10] Not the film star who became famous in the 'thirties, but a young London worker who had gone on a scholarship from the Co-operative Society to study film and theatre under Eisenstein in Moscow. He is now a professor of drama at the University of Carbondale, S. Illinois.

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The assistance of van Gyseghem was of the first importance in helping the WTM over its crisis and enabling it to evolve into a real theatre of the popular masses. The controversy which broke out in its ranks after the 1933 Olympiad may have led to a weakening of the movement numerically but it strengthened it theoretically. At the time of the Olympiad there were some 20 groups in existence; after a year the number in London may have dropped to as few as five, with five more in the provinces.

But more positive features in a qualitative sense emerged at the show given by the London groups on February 17, 1934. One of the groups, which had reorganised itself as the "Rebel Players" scored a significant success with its presentation of the one-act play *Gas*—significant, because this play was one of the last, if not *the* last, "curtain" or "naturalistic" plays performed before the WTM went over lock, stock and barrel to agit. prop. and was thus amongst the first to be revived when the tradition of stage-drama was taken up again. It was a fine play about people trapped in a gas-shelter during a possible war, and was revived again when Merseyside Left Theatre gave it in October 1937.

Another significant feature of the London Show was the work of the Jewish group "Proltet", which was adjudged to have presented in *The Great Deception* the best agit. prop. sketch. This group played a foremost part in carrying on the theoretical controversy in the WTM; in April/May issue of the 1934 Bulletin an article from this group declared that the issue was not "Agit. prop. or drama?" but "Agit. prop. *and* drama" and was the first to make a clear statement on this question. The general summing up made by the WTM leadership on the London show was:

> "The audience thought they had been given a better show than the last occasion; but undoubtedly the performances given by the open-platform groups (i.e. the agit. prop. groups—LAJ) were extremely poor. Technically and politically the open-platform sketches showed a grave set-back. Weighing up the show we can put on the credit side (1) a much better show from the organisational aspect, (2) a first-class orchestra, (3) the new dance-groups, (4) the use of the film, (5) the Rebel Players and Proltet, and (6) the recitations. On the debit side, the poor showing of the open-platform groups, which counter-balanced the good points of the show."[11]

Many of these features—the orchestra, the new dance-groups, the use of the film, as well as the performances of the gymnasium and children's groups—were in line with the decisions taken by the IURT after the Moscow Olympiad to widen its whole artistic base and deal in more detail with the growing activities of the national sections.

[11] WTM Bulletin, March 1934, p. 24.

The Rebel Players

But undoubtedly the most significant of all the positive features was the work of the Rebel Players. As has been noted, this group reorganised itself in the summer of 1933 to present "curtain" plays. This did not mean that it simply jettisoned its agit. prop. methods and experiences completely. Its productions rather drew on these in order to evolve a drama of conflict dealing with immediate issues. One sketch, which must have been one of its first attempts to apply the techniques of agit. prop.—i.e., brevity, compactness and immediacy—to the drama, was *It's a Free Country, Ain't It?*

This could be played by five persons and lasted less than ten minutes. It is a series of six short scenes, each illustrative of and concluding with the play's title. Its object is to show changing applications or interpretations of this maxim in conditions of mass unemployment and Tory repression. In scene 1, the long-service employee, Robinson, reproves a junior for coming late to work and warns him that he might find himself unemployed. He protests against being compelled to contribute to the upkeep of the idle unemployed—after all, it's a free country.

In scene 2 Robinson is summoned before his employer and told that trade is so bad that he must be dismissed; Robinson is frantic—he is buying a house, which he will now lose; the employer *must* give him another chance. But, as the employer says, there is no "must" about it—he is not *compelled* to employ Robinson—after all, it's a free country.

In scene 3, Robinson meets his former junior and tells him what has happened. The junior points out that long and faithful service will not save a man from becoming "scrap". After all (turning to the audience) it's a free country! In scene 4 Robinson is interviewed for another job. His prospective employer outlines his duties—charge of a warehouse, general accountancy, correspondence, cleaning and driving his employer's car, knowledge of French, German and shorthand. For this "sinecure" the princely sum of 35/- a week is offered! Robinson protests but the employer threatens to report him to the Labour Exchange: he can offer what pay he likes—after all, it's a free country!

Scene 5 tells of an unemployed demonstration. Robinson, now out of work for two years, is afraid of "agitators" but admires the marching unemployed. He is proud to belong to a country where the unemployed may demonstrate—with police protection! It's a free country! The police then turn on the unemployed and baton them. They also prevent Robinson from going where he wants to and drag him off despite his protests that "It's a free country!"

In the final scene Robinson is up before the magistrate, who fines him £10 with the alternative of three months' imprisonment for "assaulting the

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police": of course Robinson is free to go where he likes—so long as he doesn't want to go where the police forbid him; he is also free to appeal against the verdict—so long as he puts down £50 as bail. The sketch ends with Robinson saying, "That's all right for the rich, but how can I find £50 to appeal? (Turns to audience) It's a free country, ain't it?"

Lessons Learned

Important features of this sketch are its clarity, sobriety and concreteness. The connection between class and freedom is clearly shown and false conceptions of freedom clearly exposed. The language in unaffected, realistic and apt—the style of each different character (junior, boss, magistrate, etc.) being appropriate to that character, yet all styles pitched at much the same level of factual exposition. The situations are all outlined with dramatic economy, the key line always finding its appropriate position at the end. The sketch is effective because it accomplishes its purpose with the simplest possible means. It shows that the Rebel Players had learned the lessons, both positive and negative, of agit. prop. and were out to avoid the worst mistakes of the 1930-33 period.

Here we have in embryo a real dramatic figure, a man whose bitter experiences come into conflict with his petty-bourgeois outlook. The structure of the sketch is "epic"—a series of scenes, each of which tells up something more about the social and political background and shows us the progressive development of a non-class-conscious worker. In a very simple way the sketch reminds us of the development of Pelagea Vlassova in Brecht's *Die Mutter*.

The work of the Rebel Players in 1934 shows it moving over more and more to one-act plays, going back to the pre-1930 period for some of them, and finding new ones. Thus in addition to *Gas* it produced *The Fight Goes On*, and new productions included *Dr. Krupps* and *A People's Court*.

The latter play deals with the administration of justice in the Soviet Union. A professional judge (a woman), assisted by two lay assessors, tries the case of an energetic young member of the Communist Party, whom a girl of nineteen claims to be the father of her child. The young party member confidently—a little too confidently—disclaims paternity and puts forward what appears to be a cast-iron alibi. The judge patiently questions him and the girl, and then adjourns the case in order to institute enquiries about some point in the alibi. The young man leaves the court and the second case is called—an "eternal triangle" involving a shooting. Before this begins the judge hints at the possible culpability of the woman in the case, suggesting dramatically a contrast with the probable honesty of the girl in the paternity case. The young communist suddenly reappears. He has seen the baby, has been moved by the sight of it to think over the judge's remarks touching the honour of a communist and admits paternity. He leaves the court with the girl.

Simplicity Conveys the Message

At first sight this might appear to be a very pedestrian piece of pro-Soviet propaganda. But the evident simplicity, almost naivete, is the very quality needed to convey its message. The growing fascisation of the judiciary in Britain was at this time attacking the democratic liberties of the people, with increasing police terror, new repressive legislation like the "Incitement to Disaffection" Act and a large measure of tolerance for, if not complicity with, the British Union of Fascists.

The simplicity of the setting and the plot in *The People's Court* throws the emphasis onto the characters themselves, the ordinary folk with their doubts and foibles. The author has tried to show that justice is *a way of life* for people in a socialist society, not an imposing, bewigged, oppressive system of juidicial and penal "impersonality" as in a class state. The opening stage directions are symbolic of this:

> "The room has been a schoolroom and is not essentially changed. Unlike an English court of law it is light and airy . . . The general impression of the room is cleanish and bare. The floor is of swept (or fairly swept) boards. The presiding judge . . . is a woman of the upper-peasant or artisan-class type, aged forty or forty-two. Her dress is undistinguished . . . "

The simple setting is not only ideal technically for an amateur group; it throws the responsibility for a good dramatic performance on the actors, who must make their characters credible and effective. A most admirable point is that the young party member is shown to have a tendency towards arrogance and careerism, but fails in his attempt to hide these negative features behind his party badge: Soviet justice has no use for the "old school tie"—even if it is a red one.

It might be asked—what was the practical importance of a play like this to the Rebel Players? Should not a new play by a British author (in this case it was Hubert Griffith) more suitably have had a British background? The Rebel Players were of course aware of the necessity of portraying and interpreting the British scene and went on to produce plays with a British background like *Slickers, Ltd.* But it was also necessary to show British audiences of the time what certain aspects of life under socialism looked like in practice. The Soviet Union was the only country which could provide experiences of this nature, and the attempt to portray some of these experiences dramatically was called for, both artistically and politically, by the times in which the Rebel Players worked.

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It was vital to give the British people an *imaginative insight* into the practical workings of socialism. The whole aesthetic purpose of culture in the drama as in other fields is to communicate to a people a real feeling of a wider experience than each individual can acquire in his own life, experience which will help people to transform themselves and their society into something better. In this sense imagination soars above the earthbound nature of day-to-day experiences and lifts it into a new context, which is more meaningful because it connects present struggle with future prospects and presents a vision of them.[12]

New Material Produced

The Rebel Players again went back to the earlier triumphs of the WTM and put the *Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* into rehearsal. But they also saw to the production of new material and appointed a repertoire commission for the purpose. The IURT's journal *International Theatre,* for October 1934, tells us:

> "Plays written by members of the repertoire committee are as follows: *Fate or* —!, dealing with the dangers surrounding child workers; *Slickers, Ltd.,* exposing the intrigues of finance, big business, and politicians in a critical situation, and the workers' answer; *Hunger Marchers,* revealing the awakening of agricultural workers to their own oppression, in their attempt to aid the hunger marchers, who are to pass through their village."[13]

A printed programme gives details of an "Evening of Social Drama" given in London on October 12, 1935 under the motto "Art is a Weapon of the Masses". The programme was planned as follows:

1. *Twenty Minutes,* a one-act play by Cheharkov
2. *Slickers, Ltd.,* a one-act play by John Hammer
3. *A Man and a Woman,* a mass-recitation by Ernst Toller
4. *Waiting for Lefty,* a one-act play by Clifford Odets.

The programme may have been altered to exclude the last item in order not to offend Odets' agents, who had refused the Rebel Players permission to play it. (It had been given in London by the New York Theatre Group at the Longacre Theatre on March 26, 1935). However, since it was in fact produced by them shortly afterwards, it will be discussed here as part of the planned programme.

The Cheharkov is a light-hearted, even slight, piece which deals with a serious theme—the legal simplicity of marriage and divorce in the Soviet Union, and the danger of abusing this simplicity. The scene is a registrar's office. A couple, ten years married and now furiously at odds with one another, come to the registrar and demand a divorce. They are told to wait for twenty minutes, which is the time it will take to draw up the necessary papers. A young couple enter, bent upon a speedy marriage, and are asked to wait while the registrar completes the businss he already has in hand. The young couple begin to quarrel and the intending divorcees begin to reflect on the step they are taking—is it not as hasty and unwise as the young lovers' decision to marry? They decide to stay together, while the young couple quarrel violently and cancel their intended wedding. The couples leave. The harassed registrar is just about to settle down quietly when another young couple enter. They wish to marry—but they must sit on a bench and wait the usual "twenty minutes".

This little comedy shows a corner of a society trying to build socialism and presents human problems which arise between the sexes in the course of it. It shows not heroic, but ordinary, fallible people tackling their difficulties under a legal system intended to give them the utmost freedom and responsibility, in contrast with the inhumanly rigid and hypocritical puritanism of law in a capitalist society. The quality underlying the apparent frivolity is a sensible humanity: the law, embodied in the figure of the long-suffering registrar, does what the citizens want it to do—carry out their will; but since it represents the collective experience of socialist society, it is wise enough to make them think over their decisions before putting them too hastily into operation. In socialism "the law's delays" have their uses!

A Play About Britain

Slickers, Ltd. has by way of contrast a genuinely British background and represents a significant addition to the repertoire. The scene is the office of Sir Weldon Birthright, chairman and managing director of the Birthright Investment and Finance Corporation. The set is a painted backcloth or screen, showing large money-bags and four big guns, the muzzles of which are cut out forming openings through which the characters speak. The plot is simple: war is expected to break out between France and Germany. All the male characters except one are frantically trying to buy shares in Slickers, the price of which is rising rapidly. There are staccato exchanges of dialogue on the telephone, with the characters ceaselessly popping up at the cannon-mouths in the backcloth. All have but one object—to get in on the bull-market and make money out of the war.

[12] Cf. V. I. Lenin's quotation from Pisarev to this effect in *What is to be Done?* (1902), Selected Works, London 1937, Vol. 2, p. 181.

[13] Details from *International Theatre,* Moscow, October 1934, Nos. 3-4, p. 55.

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The Man on the Tape Machine appears frequently, quoting prices and items of crisis news. Sir Weldon agrees to speak at the clergyman's "Prayers for Peace" meeting, brushing aside his secretary's question, "But how can you address a peace meeting when you've been buying and selling Slickers all day and making a profit out of them?" Then comes a turn in the situation. While Sir Weldon is dictating his phoney "Peace" speech, another character appears and succeeds in selling Sir Weldon some shares.

This is the beginning of the landslide for the speculators. In France the people revolt against the war; British transport workers refuse to handle munitions and dockers have thrown guns into the sea; the German army has mutinied; even Slickers' own workers are threatening to stop production, etc., etc. The speculators are now trying to double-cross one another under the guise of goodwill offers to sell. The bottom falls out of the market. All the speculators are ruined. One of them, Lord Wynmore, blows his brains out. Revolutionary uprisings are reported from all over Europe. The game is up. "Can't anything be done?" cries the Reverend Pye desperately. "Yes," answers Sir Weldon, "you can pray for war!"

What the dramatist has done here is to select certain simple but striking techniques of décor, make-up and staccato dialogue not for any avant-gardist display, but as the media by means of which he has created a fast-moving, almost cinematic comedy which parodies and exposes the hard-boiled slickness of the ruling-class. It depends for its effect to no small extent on careful production, and a high standard of performance in a style which must be distinguished for speed and clarity. It is evidence of the fact that by 1934 the WTM, or at least the Rebel Players, had recognised that a high artistic standard was essential for the success of a left-wing theatre. That this play demands such standards is one of its intrinsic merits.

Waiting for Lefty

But the play that provides the most striking blend of realist drama and agit. prop. is undoubtedly Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty*. This one-acter represents a level of dramatic achievement in the agit. prop. genre which is far above all hitherto similar attempts in the English language and has scarcely been paralleled since.[14] The curtain rises on a bare stage, with the committee of the New York taximen's union seated in a semi-circle. The scene is dominated until shortly before the end by Harry Fatt, the crooked union organiser, who addresses the audience as if it were a union meeting.

Voices from the audience demand a strike and are threatened by Fatt's gun-slinging bodyguard. The voices from the audience demand to know where Lefty Costello, the union's leading militant, is. A series of flashbacks, taking place and spotlighted on different parts of the stage and clearly suggested by film techniques, show how various members of the committee or rank-and-file have been driven by their own personal experiences to fight for their own private happiness by siding with the working class. The taxi-driver Joe has been goaded into action by his wife's contempt for his spinelessness in their struggle against poverty and exploitation: the young laboratory assistant has refused an offer to help make poison-gas and spy on an eminent scientist, and knocked his boss down. Young Sid, a cab-driver, cannot afford to marry the girl he loves on the miserable pay he gets. Fatt tries to stem the rising tide of militancy by presenting a "strike victim" who tries to convince the meeting that all strikes are failures, but he is exposed as a professional company spy by his own brother who is sitting in the audience.

The next flashback shows an unemployed actor touting for work in an agent's office and being rejected: the agent's stenographer gives him a dollar to buy "ten loaves—or nine loaves and a copy of the Communist Manifesto". A doctor is sacked from a privately-owned hospital because of economic retrenchment—and also because he is a Jew. The tide of militancy continues to rise until Fatt and his gunman are brushed aside and a militant taximan named Agate addresses the meeting. The news is brought that Lefty Costello has been shot dead, and Agate makes his final appeal to the meeting:

AGATE: (crying) Hear it, boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me. Coast to coast! HELLO AMERICA! HELLO. WE'RE STORM-BIRDS OF THE WORKING CLASS. WORKERS OF THE WORLD . . . OUR BONES AND BLOOD' and when we die they'll know what we did to make a new

[14] "With his 50-minute one-act play *Waiting for Lefty* Odets performed an invaluable service to art and propaganda. This one-act play is of a high artistic standard . . . " Professor E. Brüning, *Albert Maltz Ein Amerikanischer Arbeiterschriftsteller*, Halle 1957, p. 58. However, in the same work Professor Brüning points out that Odets is the spokesman of the decaying middle class, and in his essay, "*Die Amerikanische Arbeitertheaterbewegung der 30er Jahre*" (The American Workers' Theatre Movement of the 'Thirties), printed in the *Zeitschrift für Anglistik/Amerikanistik*, Berlin 1961, No. 4, points to the "romantic overtones" that arise from Odets' class position, and quotes the criticism of John Howard Lawson: "It is true that the depression has forced many technicians, actors, doctors to become taxi-drivers. But here we have a militant strike committee made up largely of declassed members of the middle class. One cannot reasonably call these people 'stormbirds of the working class'" (p. 384).

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world! Christ—cut us up to little pieces. We'll die for what is right! Put fruit trees where our ashes are!
(to audience): Well, what's the answer?

ALL: STRIKE!
AGATE: LOUDER!
ALL: STRIKE!
AGATE: (and OTHERS on Stage): AGAIN!
ALL: STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!!!

Curtain

The interweaving of personal experience with changing political attitudes is managed with great skill, so that a many-sided picture of a corrupt society emerges out of the flashback episodes and the personal reasons for collective militant action are strongly motivated. In the struggle between capital and labour no-one can remain neutral and the audience is powerfully drawn into the play and involved in the militant conclusion.

The scenes are managed on the bare stage by variations of lighting which pick out now one spot, now another. The main structural elements in the play are the committee, the corrupt union organiser Fatt, who is instructed by the author to show himself everywhere as an embodyment of the ubiquitous menance of capitalism—and of course the audience. Odets has based the dramatic structure on a form well-known in American—and also in English—popular entertainment, that of the black-faced minstrel show. The strike committee is a sort of chorus which is allowed a certain liberty in commenting on the action which consists entirely of an "agon" (in the Artistophanic sense) between Capitalism-Fatt and the rebellious audience-proletariat. Odets makes no bones about using every possible method to rouse the audience to enthusiasm, including the use of music.

Waiting for Lefty was the fruit of the long and wide experience of the American workers' and progressive-professional theatres in the field of social drama. It was the sort of play towards which the much smaller, less widely based and unprofessional WTM had for years been groping—the linking together of short, sharply effective, single scenes into a wider dramatic unity which exposed a social problem and moved an audience to action. It was the powerful dramatic basis which enabled the Rebel Players to evolve finally into a solidly organised, democratic theatre of the left, basing its outlook on that of the revolutionary working class and drawing its support from increasing sections of working and middle class opponents of Fascism and war.

Unity Theatre

The Rebel Players, reinforced by a few other groups, and numbering 60 active, and 300 associate—or audience-members, turned itself at the beginning of 1936 into the "Unity Theatre Club". It rented a small disused church hall in Kings Cross and converted it into a theatre. It not only performed in this theatre; it also took its plays, sketches and mass-recitations to demonstrations, working-class meetings and the like, wherever it was required. Unity Theatre Club inspired the foundation of hundreds of "left" drama groups all over the country in the years 1936-9.[15] Its greatest success was *Waiting for Lefty*, of which London Unity gave over 300 performances in the pre-war period, and which was produced all over the country by local "Left Theatre" groups—in most cases outside the theatre.

"Lefty" not only proved a golden gain to the repertoire which was of tremendous use to Unity and the Left Theatre groups. It also inspired two British taxicab drivers, Roger Gullan and Buckley Roberts (known collectively as "Herbert Hodge") to write a comedy called *Where's That Bomb?* which also proved a valuable addition to the repertoire of the workers' theatre. "Lefty" with its solid core of working-class militancy, its drawing-in of allies from the middle and professional classes (the doctor, the actor) and its involvement of the audience in the action of the play, corresponded exactly to the political needs of the mid-'thirties—the building of a wide popular front against Fascism and war, based on a growing unity of militant working-class forces. It accelerated the development of that particular form of the workers' theatre which was the cultural reflex of this growing unity and was itself shaped by it, as well as contributing to it a joy and a vision which was a powerful inspiration in the struggle for a better a fuller life.

[15] An undated post-war (circa 1949) pamphlet entitled *People's Theatre*, published by Unity Theatre Society Ltd., speaks of 500 such groups (p. 3).

A Communist Party Pamphlet

WHICH WAY FOR LABOUR?

Gerry Cohen

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Discussion Contributions on:

Trends in Youth Culture

Jim Cornelius

The article by Martin Jacques in the September 1973 issue of *Marxism Today* was, I believe, a very good in-depth look-at and analysis of the major trends in a little-studied and much-maligned aspect of society. It is important for Communists to put developments in the attitudes, appearance, art, music and magazines of the young generation, particularly over the last ten years, in both their political and social perspectives in order to analyse and, where necessary, criticise from a Marxist viewpoint. It could not be said that such objectivity was used in the follow-up article in December last by John Boyd (a rehash of his attack made on youth at the National Congress). It would seem as if Comrade Boyd's prejudices have led him into non-Marxist standpoints in order to refute the possibility that the youth revolt has been anything more than "the natural dissatisfaction between age and youth blown up out of all recognition" by Capital which has "moved in", deliberately fostered and exploited.

I would obviously accept the charge of exploitation by Capital, which has had for a very long time the ability to encapsulate, absorb, divert and make money out of ideologies and organisations opposed to or in competition with it. Whilst publishers such as *Penguin* have published the writings of Marx and other revolutionaries, their desire to make a profit has not negated the ideas and ideals of those people. It is inaccurate to look at people like the Beatles and say that, because they have made a lot of money, they were "fostered" by Capital and that therefore their feelings or influences upon the young generation have been of a bourgeois nature. Martin Jacques rightly points out that in the beginning their ideas and inspirations stemmed from a genuine rebellion against the existing music and a condemnation of the values of society: "I don't care too much for money, money can't buy me love".

Lenin's Approach

As Comrade Boyd states that it was his intention to attempt to base his case on "Lenin's rejection of special cultures and his three basic principles for the advancement of proletarian culture", it is necessary to look closer at his interpretation of Lenin and the possibility of developing a proletarian culture within Capitalist society. Another part of the draft resolution on proletarian culture that Comrade Boyd quotes from Lenin also states:

> "Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this direction, *inspired by the practical experience of the proletarian dictatorship as the final stage in the struggle against every form of exploitation, can be recognised as the development of a genuine proletarian culture.*"

There are two points which stem from this quote: first, the important proposition that proletarian culture is only finally created during the dictatorship of the proletariat and, secondly, that Marxists should not automatically reject all aspects of bourgeois culture. When Lenin condemns the formation of special cultures it is in regard to the Soviet Union, as it was in the position to move towards the establishment of a proletarian culture by having satisfied the criteria of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This interpretation is confirmed by finishing the quote used by Comrade Boyd from the "Task of the Youth Leagues": "Proletarian culture must be the result of a natural development of the stores of knowledge which mankind has accumulated *under the yoke of capitalist society, landlord society and bureaucratic society.*" Lenin proposes that this will lead to proletarian culture when bourgeois culture is reshaped, and that this cannot be done by "people restricted by bourgeois limits or bound by bourgeois prejudices". It is obviously possible, however, to have an anti-bourgeois culture which rejects the values of or is more progressive than bourgeois society.

Counter-Culture

Most generations within modern-day society have established their own music, usually in opposition to, or rejected by, their parents. But the difference between the past youth rebellions and the recent example is that, as Martin Jacques states, although previous ones have spread into the spheres of clothing and hair, they were never co-ordinated into what could be classified as a culture like the present trends. Because of this generation's articulateness, educational level and greater awareness and understanding of other cultures, along with the technological advances of society, the youth rebellion

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turned into what could be classified as a culture using all art forms and generating "its own philosophy, its own ideology, its own press (*IT*, *Oz*, etc.) and its own institutions (open-air pop festivals, etc.)". By 1967, it had co-ordinated into what has been called "alternative culture", but I would rather use the phrase "counter-culture" because it is an anti-bourgeois culture, as defined above, created by working-class and student youth. It was not, as suggested by Comrade Boyd, the Capitalist class imposing this and then making money, for many (obviously not all) of the institutions, publishing groups, recording labels and fashion groups were formed by representatives of this new culture—e.g., Andrew Oldham, Robert Stigwood, Brian Epstein, albeit that most have now been absorbed within the Capitalist class.

Comrade Boyd's assertions suffer from a lack of any factual foundation and do not attempt to answer the close examination made by Martin Jacques of the developments in music and the youth culture in general, especially in regard to the importance of the period 1967/8 and its effect on the later attitudes, particularly political, of the young generation. There is no mention of the role of Bob Dylan and the way he epitomised first the dissatisfaction and then the alienation of youth:

> "Even after abandoning the anthem-writing period, when he turned to a new kind of literary epic, Dylan became more political in mood than before. At a certain period in a young man's life, he will say, 'how many more years?' and a little bit later on, having been around and seen what happens, casing the joint and getting a better sense of the immensity of the forces in play, he knows it takes a damn long time. The change involves understanding that laws are not written out of scruples of human instincts; that's not how they're made. If anything, they are dim reflections of the realities of power. By the sixties, Dylan and the Movement and everybody just knew the world is run by these criminals in power, knew how powerful these criminals are. The lamentable deaths, the betrayals, the losing of hope —it comes as no surprise. That's where Dylan moved to, where the Movement moved to at the same time."[1]

Youth Concern and Protest

When Comrade Boyd asks, "Where are these 'pop leaders' now?", the answer is that they realised both they and their fans were being used and exploited and that there should be no such thing as "leaders", merely innovators.[2] His condemnation of the Beatles takes no account of the work done by George Harrison in support of Bangladesh, and John Lennon's support of many Left-wing causes. He gives an unnecessary and non-Marxist put-down of the role of demonstrations, "a highly overrated part of politics", because of the inability to argue against the fact that in this period young people took part in them in large numbers. The reiteration of a statement by someone called Robert Stevenson that " 'often protesting students' and young people 'are confused about the aims of their protest' " gives support to a reactionary viewpoint heard many times.

As a Marxist, one obviously agrees that "study before action" is important, but it does not mean that before protesting against the inhumane manifestations of Capitalist society young people must or will sit down and study Marx, Engels and Lenin. If they do study, it is more likely going to be the ideas of people they immediately identify with or who instantly inspire their passions and adventurous spirits. It is not our task as Communists merely to put them down and say they are being conned or are wrong, but to understand their actions or views and interpret them, which Comrade Boyd does not attempt to do.

He attributes to young people faults in regard to their apathy over such issues as unemployment and internment in Northern Ireland which are true of the majority of the working class. This is then used to repudiate the fact that young people are concerned about issues that affect them without any attempt to consider, as Martin Jacques does, those areas where young people are active and involved, even if they do not always appear to have an immediate political significance: "it would seem that this 'youth rebellion' has increasingly been channelled into action on more specific issues . . . for example, the emergence and development of the student movement, the school student's movement, the women's movement, the increasing participation of young workers in industrial struggles and the various artistic alternatives".[3] There is no recognition by Comrade Boyd of the linkage between the youth culture and the awareness and support by young people of the struggles against Imperialism and

[1] Carl Oglesby discussing Dylan's effect on the S.D.S.

[2] As shown by Dylan's statement: "I told them not to follow leaders, to watch parking meters. I wasn't going to fall for that, for being any kind of leader. The magazines fed that pap—that Dylan, the Stones, the Beatles, we were all leaders. And because I wanted out they all started to rap me. But who could live up to that kind of thing? . . . But the times are tough. Everybody wants a leader. They only want somebody to lead them out of their troubles".

[3] Martin Jacques.

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colonial oppression in South-East Asia (Vietnam in particular), South and Latin America and Africa. There is no acknowledgement of the work done by young people, particularly members of the YCL, in successfully fighting for a TUC Youth Conference.

In Tune, but not Uncritical

However, our job as Communists is not merely to be identified with the problems and struggles of young people at work, but also to be in tune with their cultural and social aspirations and attitudes in order to help them raise their political demands and understanding. This does not mean the uncritical acceptance of the many reactionary elements of youth culture, but instead the understanding of and constructive rather than destructive and paternalistic criticism of the cultural, social and political trends within the young generation. This means rejecting such out-dated moralising phraseology as "sensuous depths" and Comrade Boyd's condemnation of the discotheque as "imposed alienation" where "not one thought, let alone a social idea, takes place". It must have been these sort of attitudes Lenin was condemning when he stated that "the training of the Communist youth must not consist of sentimental speeches and moral precepts".[4]

[4] From "The Task of the Youth Leagues".

Brian Filling

It is quite astonishing that a member of our Party's leadership can produce an article ("Trends in Youth Culture: Some Aspects") which so clearly shuns a firm class position.

Muddled is the kindest thing I can say about Comrade Jacques' eclectic opening to the discussion.

Martin's thesis remains unclear throughout, unless he was merely setting out to give a chronology of selected events, records, etc. in the 1960s, rather than any analysis. One of the reasons for the lack of clarity is that he makes so many "qualifications and reservations"[1][first sentence of his article] that one begins to wonder if there can be any substance left in his 10,000 word article. But there is a little substance, and since most of it is bad, it needs to be answered.

Take firstly his qualifications and reservations:

(i) "a rather hurriedly prepared speech by a layman in the field".[2] This must account for some of the muddle he gets into, but certainly not all.

(ii) "the concept of youth culture remains generally vague and virtually always implicit."[3] Indeed! Are we, the contributors to the discussion, meant to attempt to define "youth culture" or are we supposed to discuss a "generally vague" and "virtually always implicit" ephemeral something that Martin, himself, seems to suggest is now dead.

(iii) Besides not defining "youth culture", the article is entitled "Trends in Youth Culture" thus implying that youth culture is (or was) a fact and that the article is about trends *within* it. How can we discuss trends in something we haven't defined? To make matters worse: the full title is actually "Trends in Youth Culture: Some Aspects". How un-Marxist can you get—you don't define the "something" but go on to write about trends within it, and at that only "some aspects"!

(iv) Martin says he has "not dealt sufficiently with the position of industrial youth"[4], and yet he can later say "industrial youth undoubtedly remains the most crucial group politically."[5] If there was an evasion of the problem of definition before, here Martin is now dealing "insufficiently" with the most "crucial group politically" amongst youth. This remains in an inbalance in Jacques' article away from the young people of the core of the class whose historic mission it is to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. This is inexcusable and no amount of self-criticism in terms of reservations and qualifications can compensate. It is also inexcusable for the reason that the Young Communist League, having conducted a debate within its own ranks came to a position where at its most recent Congress the delegates unanimously passed a resolution which, in speaking of the youth and student alliance, stated that, "Its main motive force, central to it and providing the key to its unity and strength must be the labour movement youth."[6]

Alliance

One of Martin's substantial points is that "the social distance between student youth on the one hand and working-class youth on the other has considerably narrowed . . . the point should not be exaggerated. There is still an enormous gulf between the student at Oxbridge and the engineering apprentice in Glasgow, *but between extremes,* as it were, the tendency is apparent and the implications are important." [My emphasis—B.F.][7]

I accept that the student at Oxbridge is *one* extreme, but is he really saying that the engineering apprentice in Glasgow (or Manchester, or Sheffield,

[1] Jacques, p. 268, line 1.
[2] Jacques, p. 268, line 9.
[3] Jacques, p. 268, line 16.
[4] Jacques, page 268, line 23.
[5] Jacques, page 270.
[6] 29th Young Communist League Congress 1973.
[7] Jacques, page 270.

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or Birmingham, or Newcastle) is the other extreme? Extremes of what, anyway?

Rather than being atypical (whereas the Oxbridge student, even among students let alone the mass of youth is certainly atypical) engineering apprentices in the large proletarian centres constitute a substantial part of the core of industrial youth which as Martin says himself "undoubtedly remains the most crucial group politically."

Martin talks of homogeneity among youth between 1963 and 1967 and heterogeneity among youth at present. Is this an argument for the social distance lessening between student and working youth?!

Comrade Jacques' method, whatever it is, is certainly not scientific and rather than helping us as Communists to isolate and discuss the factors that will encourage the development of a *political* alliance between student and working youth, he, in fact, blurs the problem and indeed could lead to some comrades thinking, not in terms of an *alliance* of student and working-class youth but rather to them thinking of the merging of the two into a classless entity termed "youth". His thesis, then, from being a theoretical muddle could lead to political confusion in practice. Indeed the Young Communist League at its 28th Congress in April 1971, criticised this very position in a resolution on "Challenge", saying that

> "Its (Challenge) aspirations to broad popular appeal, aimed at the mass of uncommitted youth, have proved to be incorrect. They were based on an oversimplified analysis of the political situation and the position of young people. Consequently the role of the magazine was wrongly estimated and greatly weakened as a political weapon, particularly amongst the labour movement youth . . . In the light of past experience Congress is convinced that a radical change, both in character and format, is necessary. "Challenge" must no longer be aimed simply at the mass of youth."[8]

It is to be hoped that Martin's theoretical position does not lead to similar errors in practice in the future.

Cultural Radicalism

Some of Comrade Jacques' other substantial points may be even more dangerous politically. The most dangerous is of course the very concept of "youth culture" itself. The way Martin deals with it, and indeed the concept itself, is not from a firm class position.

The crucial question which Martin neglects to pose, is: "Do the political actions and forms of activity young people go in for strengthen their class-consciousness or do they rather encourage individualistic, anarchistic, non-working-class attitudes?". This question was put in this same journal in October 1960,[9] by Arnold Kettle in an article on "How New is the New Left?" I don't believe Comrade Kettle answered the question correctly then, but at least he posed it.

The new stage in the youth movement begun in the 1960's was a contradictory one. Youth workers, in the main, trended to be passive and at the same time "cultural radicalism" which shuns all class criteria became widespread. If there was a "youth subculture" it was expressive of a spontaneous protest against the existing system, but with only the embryo of social and political struggle. In criticising the evils of Capitalism, many young people rejected both a full-blooded Capitalist ideology but at the same time rejected a Marxist-Leninist ideology. Capitalism was rarely denounced as a system and most of the criticism was from petty-bourgeois and reformist positions. This phenomenon was not confined to Britain but was common throughout the capitalist world.[10]

Petty-Bourgeois

The cultural radicalism of the 60's was, in the main, of a petty-bourgeois character, capitalised on by the capitalists. Capitalism, by its very nature engenders a petty-bourgeois ideology and outlook. As Lenin said, ". . . small-scale production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale."[11]

In that particular passage, Lenin was talking about one of the problems facing the working class after the Socialist Revolution but small-scale production engenders capitalism equally (perhaps, more so) prior to the Revolution. Thus the boutiques selling torn and patched jeans at twice the price of undamaged pairs[12] and petty-bourgeois sons and daughters (unknowingly perhaps) following in daddy's footsteps wearing kaftans instead of three-piece suits but nonetheless doing the same thing, i.e. replicating the petty-bourgeois lives of their fathers. Big Business, of course, cashed in on this new market, turned it to the advantage of the large-scale concerns and took it from being a small to being a Big Business industry.

The "Underground", or certain members of it began to realise this. David Robins expressed it:

[8] Report of 28th National Congress, Young Communist League, 1971.

[9] Kettle, Arnold, "How New is the New Left?", MTD October 1960, p. 303.

[10] See e.g. Sinisalo, Taisto, "Youth in the Communist Movement", WMR, October, 1973, Vol. 16 No. 10. p33.

[11] Lenin, V. I. "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder", Selected Works, Vol. 10, p. 60.

[12] An advert in London tube stations at the moment shows a picture of two pairs of jeans. One pair priced at £5.95 are new and undamaged; the other pair at £9.50 are old and patched. The caption reads, "Invest Wisely: Levi's".

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"Capitalism got hip to the idea of the alternative society and became hip capitalism. Are 'Oz' 'IT', 'Trendy' and Co. going to go down in history as nothing more than a group of mental colonialists who opened up new markets for the bosses?"[13]

The creators and perpetrators of cultural radicalism (or "youth culture") then, are not the ruling class in a conspiratorial fashion. It is the capitalist system, as a system, which produces petty-bourgeois ideas and values. The petty-bourgeoisie, of course, when they open up a market, are eventually swallowed up and crushed by the capitalist class, if they fail to graduate to that class themselves.

Diversions

Protest that can be channelled into long hair, "way out" clothes,[14] smoking pot, etc. will change nothing of the essence of capitalism; indeed, protest and rebellion that can be turned into philosophies of religion (*Godspell, Jesus Christ Superstar, Guru*-this-or-that), anarchism and petty-bourgeois individualism ("do your own thing") are to be welcomed and encouraged by the ruling class.

Of course it is possible, as we all know, to quote some lyrics from some discs and prove that "social protest" was being expressed to and by the masses through their pop idols. But a good example of the need for caution and of how erroneous this approach can be is seen in an article by E. P. Thompson on the "New Left" in the revisionist "New Reasoner"[15] where he "twists" things to fit his hypothesis: "Tommy Steele anticipated Mr. Godfrey Liam by several years, in writing the appropriate hymn for NATO . . .

> "The first day there'll be lightning
> The second there'll be hail
> The third daybread there'll be a big earthquake
> So brother, forward my mail.
> Rock 'n Roll you sinners
> Sing to save your soul—
> There ain't no room for beginners
> When the world is Rock 'n Roll."

One can certainly read into this "hymn" anti-nuclear war sentiments but I think one can easily read into it religious and "escapist" or petty-bourgeois values.

It is not possible to make a detailed examination and cataloguing of all the discs that have been produced in terms of their progressive or reactionary value. However, one can say that overall (in its totality, that is) cultural radicalism was critical and protesting from a petty-bourgeois position.

Infiltration

How deep did this go among working class youth?

> ". . . the confidence (his grandfather would call it insolence) of the post-war urban teenager is helping to bring about a superficial merger between working —and middle-class cultures. The changes are most marked in leisure-time behaviour. In bowling alleys and beat clubs the Knightsbridge deb and Stepney mod rub indentical suede-clad shoulders . . .
>
> ". . . But when we move out of the pubs and dance halls into the more sombre institutions of our society it begins to seem as if this integration is no more than superficial. Scratch the classless Carnaby Street skin of a young apprentice and you will still uncover more often than not, an embryo working-class adult. In those matters which will shape the overall pattern of his life for the next fifty years he is scarcely distinguishable from his pre-war counterpart."[16]

And what are these "more sombre institutions?"—the education system, the family, work, trade unions, etc., but above all—*class*.

As Communists "who have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole"[17] we must be concerned with anything which may encourage individualistic, anarchistic, non-working class attitudes among working-class youth.

The cultural radicalism of the 60's shunning all class criteria reinforced certainly (and perhaps, infiltrated some more) petty-bourgeois ideas among groups of working class youth.

Certainly nothing should be dismissed out of hand, but Jacques does not seem to leave himself any grounds for distinguishing between incoherent revolt and purposeful clear-eyed revolt, because of his lack of firmness in class position. He appears to embrace anything youth are doing provided it comes from an unhappiness with capitalism.

Class Culture

Against the background of the general crisis of capitalism it is crucial not to obscure the class

[13] Robins, David, "Alternatives: Press" Ink, September 23, 1971, p. 3.

[14] Prudence Glyn in an article "Taking Off" in *The Times* March 26, 1974, page 11, wrote: "Mr. Pothemus, just finishing a Master of Philosophy Degree at London University, is interested in non-verbal communication and body symbolism, but always with the body plus its aides—its clothes and make-up. 'The body is the map of society; and by using—dressing the body in different ways, an individual can escape into an alternative model of society.' Mr. Pothemus posed, if I understood him, that you can change society by what you wear because of the fantasies different clothing suggests."

[15] Thompson, E. P., "The New Left" in the *New Reasoner*, summer 1959.

[16] Mabey, R., "Not on Speaking Terms", in *Class: A Symposium"*, ed. Mabey, R. (1967).

[17] Marx, K. and Engels, F., "The Manifesto of the Communist Party".

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character of culture and morals and the existence within capitalist society's culture and morals of two opposing class cultures and two opposing sets of class morals. Marxism regards the antagonism between class interests as the foundation of the contradictions in the ideological superstructure of capitalist society. Engels convincingly proved that in capitalist society there are proletarian morals that represent the interests of the future. A similar situation exists in culture. Lenin analysed this situation and his basic conclusion was that "there are two national cultures in every national culture."[18]

Developing this conclusion, Lenin wrote: "The elements of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the democratic and socialist ideology."[19] The working class is the first class in history that by virtue of its objective condition is interested in the abolition of all forms of exploitation of man by man. Its own liberation pre-supposes the liberation of society as a whole, and its class interests coincide with the basic interests of all working people.

The class consciousness of workers is, needless to say, not an inborn quality. It is moulded and strengthened in the course of the struggle against capitalism and for socialism.

In the course of that class struggle the capitalist class will stop at nothing to divide the working-class, setting Catholic against Protestant; black against white; women against men; young against old: and capitalism, by its very nature as a system will encourage petty-bourgeois cultural radicalism (or "youth culture"), thus weakening working-class consciousness by the infiltration and reinforcement of capitalist ideas in the labour movement.

One of our tasks as Communists must be to finish off the remains of petty-bourgeois cultural radicalism and replace it with a strengthened working class culture and consciousness. Comrade Jacques' article rather than clarifying this, helps to perpetuate the petty-bourgeois cultural radicalism of the 60's.

[18] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20. p. 32.
[19] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20. p. 24.

Man, Environment and the Great Growth Debate

Alan B. Anderson

While it would be unfair to expect a detailed analysis of current theories of population growth in an article which is part of an overview of the much wider discussion on the environment and the future of humanity, there are nonetheless a number of points concerning this central aspect of the growth debate in the contribution by Richard Clarke in *Marxism Today*, March 1974, (Part I), which seem to demand further, critical, consideration.

Thus, in his treatment of the early Marxist attack on the prime source of practically all the modern "pessimistic" theorists, Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Clarke can undoubtedly be accused of failing to bring out as clearly as he might either the very sweeping nature of the early Marxist condemnation of Malthus' work, or, more important than this the full ideological implications of Malthusian theory in the original or in its twentieth century forms. The early Marxist reply to Malthus was much more than a denial of his work's short-term validity; it was a statement of Marx and Engels' faith in human ingenuity and in humanity's ability to transform its own environment.

Writing of Malthus in 1844, Engels makes his position clear:

> "The extent of the land is limited, that is perfectly true. But the labour power to be employed on this area increases along with the population; and even if we assume that the increase in yield due to this increase does not always rise in proportion to the labour, there remains a third element . . . namely science, the progress of which is just as unceasing and just as rapid as that of populations . . . Science advances in proportion to the knowledge bequeathed to it by the previous generation, and thus under the most ordinary conditions it also grows in geometrical progression."[1]

This is a far more wholehearted denial of Malthus' work (which Engels elsewhere called "this vile, infamous theory, this revolting blasphemy against nature and mankind")[2] than Clarke implies when he suggests that Marxists should strike a middle course between total acceptance and total denial of the

[1] Engels, *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*.
[2] Engels, *ibid.*

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Malthusian (or neo-Malthusian) view. It is moreover a standpoint which indicates that Engels realised with far greater clarity than Clarke the ideological implications of Malthusian theory *as a whole*, and the need to reject it in total.

In many ways this takes us to the heart of what a Marxist perspective in respect to theories of overpopulation really means. Marxists must at all times attempt to see any body of theory, not as a series of separate elements, but as an interconnected whole, exploring the relationship between the parts and the whole. Furthermore, they must understand the context in which these ideas were produced and examine the way in which they may lend support to the material interests of conflicting groups within that context. Only in this way can a true appreciation of the ideological implications of a body of thought be fully established.

Overpopulation a Threat?

Applying this method to Malthusian and neo-Malthusian theory, we can understand more completely the way in which these lend support to the existing order of things. Just as Malthus was prompted to write his *Essay* by a fear of the social consequences (for capitalism) of the poverty which resulted from the early, brutal, period of British industrialisation, so too we cannot select his work from that context and present it as a purely theoretical exercise. Nor can we see his practical suggestions on the causes of, and remedies for, poverty as appendages to his thinking; on the contrary, they lie at the very heart of his work. Likewise, most of the recent theories based on Malthus share the same ideological position, in that, seeing a causal link between rapid population growth and poverty, they attempt to place the responsibility for world poverty upon the poor themselves.

It is essential that Marxists recognise that any analysis of poverty in terms of over-rapid breeding *precludes* an analysis of the economic and social structures in which poverty is located; it is equally inadvisable for Marxists to ignore (as Richard Clarke seems to do), the dangers involved in partly accepting notions of overpopulation as a threat to human well-being, for to do so is implicitly to accept the view that poverty is partly caused by the biological drives of the poor. Marxists cannot accept *parts* of a particular piece of bourgeois ideology; the work of the Marxist must be to expose and refute bourgeois ideology in *all* (and especially in its subtlest) forms. In this case that work means showing that overpopulation is *not* a major contributory cause of human misery, nor is it the major problem facing humanity in the near future. This is an essential prerequisite to the construction of an analysis of the structural causes of world poverty, and the posing of a solution to that problem.

It is certainly true that Richard Clarke does not accept the projections of the pessimists, nor the fears which these have aroused, yet one can, from a Marxist standpoint, take issue with his reasons for disagreement. Clarke relies heavily on transition theory to explain why population growth will stabilise of its own accord, yet transition theory cannot be abstracted from its own development as a counterpart to sociological theories of modernisation; theories which form one of the major attempts by bourgeois theorists to provide an alternative explanation of the inequalities which exist between societies to that offered by the Marxist concept of imperialism. For this reason Marxists should hesistate before relying too heavily on transition theory, for to invoke one bourgeois theory, in its *entirety*, to refute another, is hardly to adopt a Marxist perspective.

In addition however, there are other, empirical, reasons for rejecting transition theory either as a description of what has happened in the past, or as a guide to what may take place in the future. As a number of commentators have pointed out, a significant number of those societies which have attained stability have done so by routes which differed considerably from the transition model, while as an indicator of trends in the third world in the near future, this model has even less to offer.

Distribution the Problem

As one such commentator has argued, in the course of a detailed examination of international population trends:

> "A comparison of today's pre-industrial nations and pre-industrial Europe suggests that sufficient discordance exists to discourage the idea that demographic transition will do for currently developing countries what it did for Europe in the past."[3]

For these reasons, the Marxist, instead of placing his faith in the way in which capitalism may or not,

[3] Schnell, "Transition: Threat to Developing Nations' *in* Q. Stanford (ed.), *The World's Population.*

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of its own accord, work upon human drives, should direct his energies to challenging the link which recent theorists have attempted to establish between poverty and population growth. It is perhaps a reflection of the success of the anti-growth propagandists that so many have overlooked the very basic principle that poverty and privation take place within the framework of humanly-fashioned social structures, and that in the world today, these stem, not from an absolute scarcity of resources, but from the way in which resources are *distributed* and *used* in capitalist economies.

If we take as an example the scarcity of food, one of the main pillars of the anti-growth case, we have a situation where, on a global scale, food production has, during the last two decades, risen by an average of 3% per year. World population, on the other hand, has risen by, again on average, 1.8% per year, so it could be suggested that on a world scale we are keeping well apace of population growth. Yet far from this resulting in a greater proportion of the world's population being better fed than previously, all the indications are that the imbalances in world food consumption are greater than ever.[4]

This is not inevitable; it is a direct result of the way in which resources are *distributed* under capitalism. In Western Europe indeed, it would appear that the main problem is one, not of too little food, but of *too much*, the result being that, as a matter of deliberate policy, food resources must be destroyed or wilfully wasted, all in the interest of maintaining price (and thus profit) levels. As the *Financial Times* commented in 1968:

> "The prospect of an *unmanageable surplus of temperate food products* is a very real threat to the economic stability of many countries." (My emphasis).

In other words, the inequalities which exist today in the distribution of food are an essential feature ot the way in which the international capitalist economy works; they are neither accidental nor inevitable.

In recognition of this Marxists must adopt a more uncompromising position vis a vis population growth than Richard Clarke suggests. They must recognise that the main problem facing humanity is one of distribution, not overpopulation, and that poverty is caused by the inequalities and deliberate wastage of resources which are an integral part of the capitalist system, and not by the biological drives of the poor. They must further counter the current bourgeois theories of the neo-Malthusians with a restatement of the position adopted by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century: that given a social system geared to the *sharing* of resources, and the limitlessness of human ingenuity, we can, as the People's Republic of China has done with the most rapidly growing population in the world, not only absorb population growth, but raise living standards at the same time.

As T. V. Ryabushkin, the Soviet spokesman at the 1954 World Population Conference argued:

> "In a socialist society . . . the problem of excessive population no longer arises . . . the Malthusian theory is completely wrong, and fruitless to explain historical facts. But maybe it has some for population policy in the future? Maybe it makes some sense to reduce the rate of increase in population in any economically backward country in order to increase the level of well-being of the population in the immediate future? To these questions also we give a sharp negative answer. *The Malthusian theory is harmful because it distracts attention from really scientific ways of increasing the well-being of the working people.*" (My emphasis)[5]

To take a standpoint based on these principles is not to eschew any *socialist* planning of population as part of a general programme of social reconstruction. But at a time when anti-growth ideas constitute one of the major theoretical attempts to obscure the material roots of world poverty, it is a standpoint which we must adopt. In the debate over the consequences of continuing, rapid, population growth, Marxists must not forget that their aim is, not the end of growth, but the end of capitalism.

[4] For a fuller discussion of this, see J. McHale, *The Ecological Context.*

[5] Cited in: A. Flew Introduction to T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population.*

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